LEAP
BEFORE YOU
LOOK
BLACK
MOUNTAIN
COLLEGE
1933–1957
HELEN
MOLESWORTH

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BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE
1933–1957

HELEN MOLESWORTH
WITH RUTH ERICKSON

In 1933, John Rice founded Black Mountain College in North Carolina as an experiment in making the arts central to learning. Though it operated for only twenty-four years, this pioneering school played a significant role in fostering avant-garde art, music, dance, and poetry, and an astonishing number of important artists taught or studied there. Among the instructors were Josef and Anni Albers, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, R. Buckminster Fuller, Karen Karnes, Willem de Kooning, and M. C. Richards, and students included Ruth Asawa, John Chamberlain, Ray Johnson, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cy Twombly.

LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK is a singular exploration of this legendary school and of the work of the artists who spent time there. Scholars from a variety of fields contribute original essays about diverse aspects of the college—spanning everything from the college's farm program to the influence of the Bauhaus—and about the people and ideas that gave it such a lasting impact. Catalogue entries highlight selected works, including writings, musical compositions, visual arts, pottery, and weaving. The book's fresh approach and rich illustrations convey the atmosphere of creativity and experimentation unique to Black Mountain College that served as an inspiration to so many. This timely volume will be essential reading for anyone interested in art, radical pedagogy, and the enduring legacy of the college.

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LEAP *BEFORE YOU* LOOK

LEAP *BEFORE YOU* LOOK

BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

1933–1957

HELEN MOLESWORTH
WITH
RUTH ERICKSON

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART/BOSTON

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

JILL MEDVEDOW
ELLEN MATILDA POSS DIRECTOR

The ICA/Boston is extremely proud to present "Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933–1957," an unprecedented examination of the generative and unbridled Black Mountain College, whose radical art, artists, and ideas have had a lasting impact on the art and ideas of our time.

The ICA's decision to organize this exhibition grew from our recognition of the profound influence of Black Mountain College on today's artistic practice and educational pedagogy. For the past several years, the ICA has investigated the relationship between craft and Conceptualism through a series of exhibitions—from individual presentations of the work of such artists as Josiah McElheny and Arlene Shechet to historically significant exhibitions such as "Fiber: Sculpture 1960–Present." The ICA's new waterfront home, designed by Diller Scofidio & Renfro, was created with the explicit intent of integrating architecture, performance, and the visual arts; and our nationally recognized Teen Program, dedicated to experiential learning for adolescents, is a keystone in our work. This program of interdisciplinary arts combined with transformative teaching matches the aspirations of Black Mountain College: namely, to inspire in us an expansive notion of the arts and creativity, through close observation, physical engagement, service, and play—all central to an educated citizen's ability to participate fully in democratic society. The ICA, founded in 1936, and Black Mountain College, founded in 1933, share this Depression-era progressivism in their DNA.

Artistically speaking, "Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933–1957" presents paintings, sculpture, ceramics, letters, documentary photographs, and performances to reveal a world of color theory and material studies, looms and kilns, rustic barns and modern architecture, dance in open fields, and chance operations. The unity of art, architecture, and craft, first articulated at the legendary German art school the Bauhaus before its untimely demise in 1933, broke loose in the mountains of North Carolina and grew to include dance, poetry, and music.

Born between the two world wars, Black Mountain College spawned many of the experimental and creative expressions that have now come to characterize contemporary art. European refugees and immigrants worked alongside American artists from rural and urban backgrounds to create a new vision for arts and education in the United States. Artists well known to us today such as Josef and Anni Albers, Walter Gropius, R. Buckminster Fuller, Robert Rauschenberg, Peter Voulkos, Merce Cunningham, and John Cage worked alongside lesser-known artists such as Ruth Asawa, Karen Karnes, and Hazel Larsen Archer. The spirit of collaboration and embrace of new ideas found numerous outlets in formative relationships, experiments, and art; we see the ripple effect of waves created by Black Mountain in contemporary art today, in ideas about collectivity and resistance, performance and social practice.

Exhibition curator Helen Molesworth captures the atmosphere of artistic exchange, and the heat, energy, and new ideas it produced by articulating the "cosmopolitanism" that permeated Black Mountain College. The collision of people and ideas may still be found at artist colonies and art schools, and the cultural ecosystem is a theme that begins in Black Mountain and continues to thrive. "Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933–1957" poses a vision in which collaboration, experimentation, experiential learning, travel, and place are central to art, education, and citizenship.

This is the most ambitious curatorial project ever undertaken by the ICA. Helen Molesworth began organizing the exhibition in her former position as Barbara Lee Chief Curator of the ICA; her keen intelligence has brought new scholarly and curatorial insights to our understanding of this fertile and influential period of American history and culture. Ruth Erickson has been instrumental throughout the project, initially in her role as a research fellow and now as ICA assistant curator.

To our lenders—comprising individual collectors, public museums, and artist foundations—we appreciate your participation, generosity, and commitment to sharing this expansive view of history. We are grateful to Ann Philbin, director of the Hammer Museum, and Sherri Geldin, director of the Wexner Center for the Arts, for sharing this exhibition with publics in Los Angeles and Columbus. The National Endowment for the Humanities, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Henry Luce Foundation all provided major support enabling the ICA to realize this extensive project, and our gratitude is immense. I would also like to thank Chuck and Kate Brizius, Robert and Jane Burke, Katie and Paul Buttenwieser, the Robert E. Davoli and Eileen L. McDonagh Charitable Foundation, Bridgitt and Bruce Evans, James and Audrey Foster, Erica Gervais and Ted Pappendick, Vivien and Alan Hassenfeld and the Hassenfeld Family Foundation, Curtis R. Kemeny, Kathleen McDonough and Edward Berman, Ellen Poss, David and Leslie Puth, Cynthia and John Reed, and Charles and Francene Rodgers for their generosity.

The groundbreaking approach of so many of the Black Mountain College artists paralleled radical ideas about education and experiential learning. At the beginning of his tenure at the college, Josef Albers said his teaching mission was "to open eyes"; we believe this directive is as important today as it was in 1933.

Ruth O'Neill modeling for Josef Albers's life-drawing class, n.d.

CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HELEN MOLESWORTH

The process of making "Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933–1957" was strikingly true to its title. Jill Medvedow, the Ellen Matilda Poss Director of the ICA/Boston, green-lighted the show upon my first utterance of it; neither of us had any idea how massive an undertaking it would be until we were in midair. But true to the adventurous spirit of Black Mountain College, there were a lot of other folks who leaped with us: Ruth Erickson began as a research fellow and ended as an assistant curator at the ICA. Without her dedication and her impeccable research and writing skills, this project never would have come to fruition. Bryan Barcena served in two capacities: he was curatorial assistant for the exhibition, ensuring every detail was tended to, and along the journey he became so invested in the project that his voice graces the catalogue. Bryan is also the ICA's curatorial department assistant, which meant he managed me and my schedule in ways that afforded me the time and space to work on the project. "Leap Before You Look" belongs as much to Ruth and Bryan as it does to me. That being the case, I extend my personal thanks to Sahir and Julian Kalim and Erick Lopez for sharing their loved ones with this project. I'm grateful as well to both Philippe Vergne, director, and Santiago Vernetti, executive assistant to the chief curator, both of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, for granting me the time and enabling me to work on this exhibition from my new post.

The early funding offered by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation was crucial for the first two years of research; the effect of a long gestation period cannot be underestimated. A major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities arrived at a key point in preparing this exhibition and contributed immensely to its realization. Additional support provided by the Henry Luce Foundation completed a trifecta of grants that allowed us to work in an aspirational manner befitting the subject.

Three women deserve special mention. Anyone who works on Black Mountain College knows that we all stand on the shoulders of independent scholar Mary Emma Harris. Her research, which began in the 1970s and continues to the present, forms the bedrock of numerous archives and collections and suffuses all that is known about the college. Heather South is the archivist at the Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, located in Asheville; her good humor and near photographic memory made trips to the archives a true pleasure. Alice Sebrell is the program director of the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center in Asheville; she was generous with her time, knowledge, and contacts, enriching the project at every turn. Without these three women, this exhibition and catalogue simply would not exist.

Early in the process we organized a think tank of individuals more knowledgeable than ourselves: Ian Alteever, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Martin Brody, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA; Harry Cooper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Eva Díaz, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn; Leah Dickerman, Museum of Modern Art, New York; David Deitcher, International Center for Photography, New York; Steve Evans, University of Maine, Orono; and Jenni Sorkin, University of California, Santa Barbara, all participated in ways that helped us work our way through the many disciplines and practitioners at the college.

I was the very lucky recipient of a residency from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, which permitted a month of worry-free time to think and write surrounded by the ongoing energy and generosity of the late, great Robert Rauschenberg. Charles Atlas, Ann Brady, Michael Clark, Matthew Hall, and Anne Iobst all helped me move my ideas forward that month.

Numerous colleagues went above and beyond the call of duty to help us secure fragile loans, including Jason Andrew, Tworkov Foundation, New York; Stephanie Barron, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Melissa Watterworth Batt, University of Connecticut, Mansfield, CT; Frances F. L. Beatty, Richard L. Feigen & Co., New York; Gene Caprioglio, C. F. Peters Corporation; Harry Cooper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Aiko Cuneo, The Estate of Ruth Asawa; Brenda Danilowitz, Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, CT; Daniel Schawinsky, Schawinsky Estate, New York; Tanisha Jones, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; Evelyn Hankins, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Cole Hendrix, Asheville Art Museum; Patricia Hickson, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT; Deborah Kao, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA; Patricia Lent, Merce Cunningham Trust, New York; Nancy Perloff, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Theodore Stebbins; Cindi Strauss, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Susan Teller; Yvette Torres; Sara VanDerBeek; David White, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation; Michelle White, Menil Collection, Houston; and Elizabeth Wyckoff, Saint Louis Art Museum. The exhibition's performance programming would not be possible without the effort and inspiration of many individuals, especially John Andress, ICA/Boston; Steve Drury, New England Conservatory, Boston; Jill Johnson, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; Patricia Lent and Silas Riener, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, New York; Kathy Young, Boston Conservatory; our *Theater Piece No. 1* group, Jonathan Calm, Danielle Georges, Damon Krukowski, Timothy McCormack, and Kelly Nipper; and all of the students, dancers, and musicians who helped to animate our galleries.

Many individuals agreed to be interviewed or to listen, or they took time out of their busy schedules to teach us something: Jason Andrew, Gregg Bordowitz, Carolyn Brown, Nicholas Cernovich, Aiko Cuneo, Brenda Danilowitz, Christina Davis, Roy Dowell, Theodore Dreier Jr., Steve Evans, Mary Fiore, Jacqueline Gourevitch, Sharon Hayes, Jim Hodges, Ati Gropius Johansen, Clemens Kalischer, Karen Karnes, Vincent Katz, David Lang, Ann Lauterbach, Steve Locke, Catherine Lord, Josiah McElheny, William Craig Rice, Dorothea Rockburne, Jo Sandman, Amy Sillman, Bennett Simpson, Kenneth Snelson, Jenni Sorkin, Jeffrey Spahn, Gloria Sutton, Nicholas Fox Weber, Susan Weil, and David White all have my sincere gratitude.

Josef Albers drawing a lily for his class, April 1942. Photo by Tom Leonard.

I am equally indebted to the contributors to this catalogue: Ash Anderson, Bryan Barcena, Michael Beggs, Lauren Bellard, Martin Brody, Brigid Cohen, Harry Cooper, Brenda Danilowitz, Eva Díaz, Ruth Erickson, Steve Evans, Jennifer Gross, Jonathan Hiam, Katherine Markoski, Nancy Perloff, Jeffrey Saletnik, Alice Sebrell, David Silver, Jenni Sorkin, Cindi Strauss, and Gloria Sutton. The catalogue was beautifully designed by Purtill Family Business and impeccably edited and managed by Karen Kelly, Barbara Schröder, and Donna Wingate. Richard Gregg, director of retail at the ICA/Boston, helped us at every stage to bring the book to fruition.

I worked at the ICA/Boston for four wonderful years, and this exhibition and catalogue are a testament to the combined efforts of many ICA staff members: John Andress, associate director of performing arts; Davida Fernandez-Barkan, curatorial assistant; Karin France, government and foundation relations manager; Kelly Gifford, director of external relations; David Henry, director of performing and media arts; Darcey Moore, registrar; Toru Nakanishi, preparator; Abby Newbold, exhibitions manager; Tim Obetz, chief preparator; Jenelle Porter, Mannion Family Senior Curator; Anna Stothart, former assistant curator; and Michael (Mr. T.) Taubenburger, COO and CFO. Thanks as well to all of the folks at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (particularly director Annie Philbin and senior curator Anne Ellegood) and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (especially director Sherri Geldin and director of exhibition management Jill Davis) for their presentations of the exhibition.

My friends rallied around me when I needed them most: Jill Davis, Taylor Davis, Madeleine Grynsztejn, Catherine Lord, Jenelle Porter, Conny Purtill, Sue Schardt, and Kim Thompsen have my forever loyalty. My life with Susan Dackerman continues to be an education in optimism, bravery, and joy. This book is dedicated to all of my friends who teach art; this is my way of saying *thank you*.

BMCWBMCWBMCWB

IMAGINARY LANDSCAPE

HELEN MOLESWORTH

1
RUTH ASAWA

Her story is as improbable as America itself. Her parents were born and raised in Japan. Her mother was from a village known for its silkworms, and her father was an itinerant farmer who arrived in America with nothing save for a prodigious work ethic; their marital union was arranged for them by others. Born in California in 1926, Ruth Asawa was the fourth of seven children. She grew up in a hardworking farming family: chores structured all of the days except Saturdays, when she and her siblings went to Japanese school, where they were introduced to calligraphy. Looking back on her experience as an eight-year-old with a brush in her hands, she said, "It was like a dance. Lift your feet up and lift your hands. You have to work so this round curve turns into the next stroke."[1]

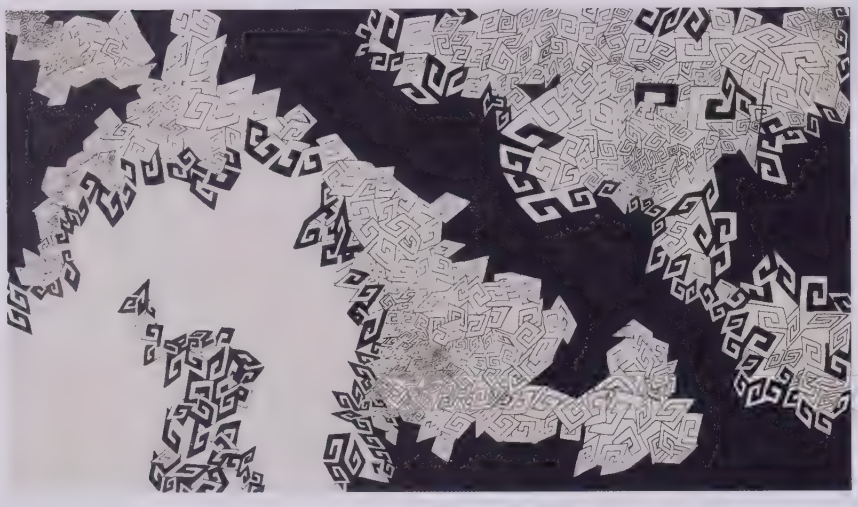
Her hardscrabble life was subject to two powerful, seemingly contradictory, social forces: First was the burgeoning progressive education movement in the public schools in California, which augmented Asawa's interest in art and furthered her sense of herself as a member of a community. Second was her family's internment, along with thousands of other Japanese immigrants and United States citizens, in camps by the US government during World War II. She was pointedly not made bitter by her confinement—at the Santa Anita racetrack and then at Rohwer War Relocation Center in Arkansas. Refusing victim status, she participated fully in the communal life established in the camps, which included informal introductions to other artists.[2] When her time in the camps ended, she went off to a teacher's college in Milwaukee, where she met Elaine Schmitt Urbain, who ultimately, along with Urbain's friend Ray Johnson, begged Asawa to join them at Black Mountain College.

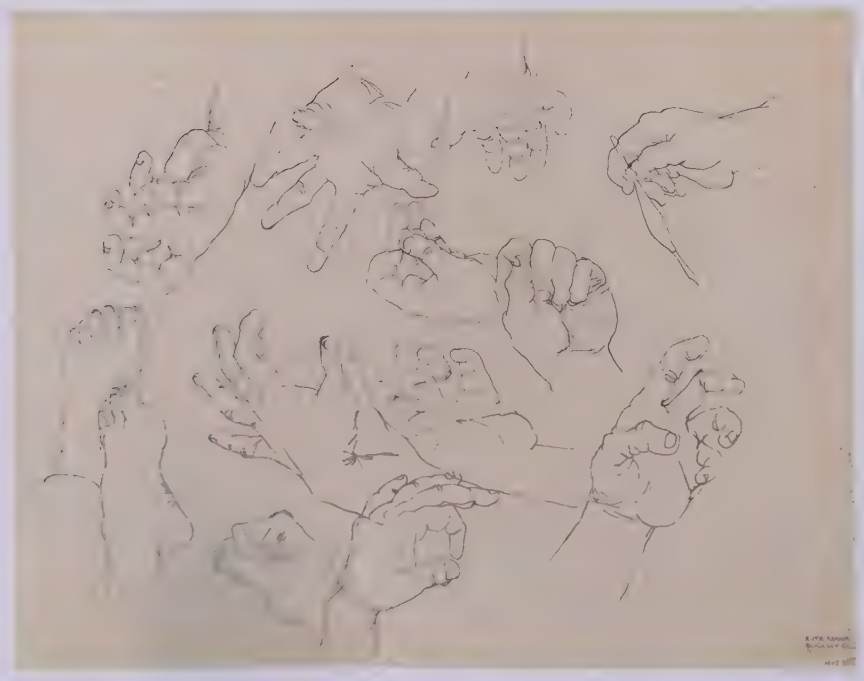
Asawa was a precocious student. She readily absorbed instructor Josef Albers's courses in design, drawing, and materials. Her drawing of meanders displays a highly sophisticated use of positive and negative space, complete with a large jagged swath of black ink that creates a ravine-like space diagonally across the page, adding energy, speed, and depth. Her study of hands and feet flaunts an almost feral intensity as the motifs repeat centrifugally on the page. Repetition was at the heart of the matter for Asawa; it appeared in her early drawing assignments for Albers's courses and again when she took the "BMC" laundry stamp and used it to cover the page in an undulating pattern as evocative of a woven curtain as it is of falling rain. Her early drawings offer repetition as both formal exploration and tactile pleasure, the DNA of what would become her most iconic works, the suspended crocheted-wire sculptures.

In 1947, Asawa, like many of her contemporaries at Black Mountain College, made a trip to Toluca, Mexico, where she joined Josef and Anni Albers, who were spending their sabbatical year there. While in Toluca, Asawa volunteered as an art teacher and ended up a student of the local basket weavers.[3] Her use of crocheted wire to form intersecting bulbous biomorphic sculptures was as original as it was a perfect marriage of the lessons she had learned from her instructors at Black Mountain. Josef Albers insisted that art display a rigorous understanding of its material properties, and Asawa's wire sculptures exploit wire's malleability, linearity, and light weight. Albers's printmaking during the Black Mountain years was a veritable dictionary of the slippage between figure and ground, inside and outside, positive and negative space—all ways of seeing and perceiving that Asawa's sculptures exploit to the hilt. On campus during the summer of 1948, she was present for R. Buckminster Fuller's first attempt at raising a geodesic dome, and her wire sculptures can be seen as an exploration of wire's capacity for tensile construction. The use of a textile-based method is a deliberate nod to the profound influence of Anni Albers, a noted Bauhaus weaver with a strong belief in the communicative properties of textiles. And, finally, the biomorphic shapes, the interlocking, undulating forms, the vaguely anthropomorphic way they hold space, each one acting as an analogue for a human body, were derived from being in and watching Merce Cunningham's dance classes.

1. Ruth Asawa, quoted in Daniell Cornell et al., *The Sculpture of Ruth Asawa: Contours in the Air* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 11.
2. For more on how the camps and Asawa's Japanese-American identity played out in her art, see Karin Higa, "Inside and Outside at the Same Time," in *The Sculpture of Ruth Asawa*, 30–41.
3. One of the hallmarks of progressive education was to allay the hierarchy between teacher and student. For more, see Ruth Erickson, "A Progressive Education," in this volume, 76–80.

previous Eini Sihvonen, *Color Transparency*, n.d. Color transparency and graphite, 6 ⅞ x 8 ⅞ inches.
opposite Ruth Asawa, *BMC (BMC.76)*, n.d. Ink on paper, 21 ½ x 17 ½ inches.





top, left Ruth Asawa, *Collage of Fern Leaves*, n.d. Leaves on paper, 16 ¾ x 20 inches
top, right Ruth Asawa's wedding ring, designed by R. Buckminster Fuller, n.d. Estate of Ruth Asawa
middle, left Ruth Asawa, *Meander Straight Lines (BMC.59)*, c. 1948. Pen, ink, and gouache on paper, 7 ⅞ x 13 ½ inches
bottom, right Alvin Lustig, cover of *Design* magazine, April 1946
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation
[illegible] Ruth Asawa, *Studies of Hands and Feet*, n.d. Ink on tracing paper, 19 x 24 inches

following spread Joseph Fiore, *Black Mountain, Lake Eden*, 1954
Watercolor on paper, 14 x 18 inches

Asawa was one of the many students and faculty who left Black Mountain only to carry its seeds to other terrains. In a letter to Albert Lanier, a fellow Black Mountain student whom she would soon marry (Fuller designed her wedding ring and Anni Albers gave her some black fabric to make a wedding dress),[4] she wrote: "I no longer identify myself as Japanese or American, but a 'citizen of the universe.'"[5] Asawa and Lanier settled in San Francisco, where he became an architect and she experienced nascent art-world success in the 1950s, raised their six children, and ultimately started the first arts program in the San Francisco public schools (the Alvarado Art Workshop, 1968–73). Her whole life was structured by her commitment to learning and teaching art—the core tenets of a Black Mountain College education.

2
HARPER'S MAGAZINE

In 1935, the journalist Louis Adamic was hoping to escape the "tempo and confusion" of New York with a few days of pastoral driving through the South. Born in Yugoslavia, Adamic, who had received a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship three years before, was encouraged to visit Black Mountain College by a friend at the Guggenheim Foundation. Upon his arrival at the college, he was given a guestroom and an invitation to dinner. The talk at supper continued long past midnight. His visit to the campus, which he expected to last for only a few days, stretched to two and a half months and resulted in the essay "Education on a Mountain: The Story of Black Mountain College," which was published in the April 1936 issue of *Harper's Magazine*. At the time, the school was three years old, and the article garnered the college its first serious encounter with publicity. The myth making had begun.[6]

Adamic's article gushes enthusiasm on every page: "In BMC there is no head-cramming. There education is *experience* that involves in action the whole person."[7] He enumerated the philosophy of the college: No required courses; one-on-one student-teacher relationships through tutoring; no classes were allowed to conflict with the elementary classes in music, drama, and the visual arts; students and faculty eat together and serve one another meals; the student government is lively and participates in college governance along with the faculty; communal living makes the individual aware of his relation to others; teachers take classes along with the students; and, most important, "one of the efforts, in which the entire community continually participates, is to bring to each one's consciousness his uniqueness—and this is not only as a potential scientist or plumber, but as a person who, being endowed with imagination, is an artist."[8] Sign me up.

The article continues, as if charting the life cycle of an extraordinary moth, by detailing the students' immersion into the community: "Are they not of the elect? Have they not turned their backs on Harvard and Vassar?"[9] He describes the initial joy of the students and its transformation into self-doubt, which then gave way to the pleasure of self-discovery. Adamic singled out three great teachers: John Rice, a classicist who taught Plato; Josef Albers, a recent German immigrant escaping the Nazi regime, who taught art; and Robert Wunsch, who ran the theater program. Adamic noted the "observer effect": "This article, which brings [the college] more or less into the open for the first time, is likely to affect it drastically."[10]

The die had been cast, and this utopian boosterism would continue throughout the college's existence. *Design* magazine dedicated a special issue to Black Mountain in 1946. Students and faculty produced myriad brochures designed to lure students who, in paying tuition, would keep the place going. Sunny and optimistic images of young people studying, working the land, and making art created an image of an educational utopia. But by 1957 it was over. The college had lost its way, lost its funding (not that there was ever much), and lost its ability to sustain itself. The world had changed. Born in the midst of the Great Depression, the college survived through World War II, experienced a boom in the flush years of the GI Bill, and began to decline in the early 1950s. By the time the college closed, many of the artists, faculty, and students who had been involved were famous. More than a decade later, historian Martin Duberman's now-classic page-turner *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* would spearhead a new era of Black Mountain mythmaking.[11]

top Kenneth Kurtz delivering a lecture in front of a South Pacific map, c. 1941.
bottom: Photo shoot of Kenneth Kurtz's lecture, c. 1941.

4. Aiko Cuneo, Ruth Asawa's daughter, in conversation with the author, December 13, 2012, San Francisco.
5. Asawa, quoted in *The Sculpture of Ruth Asawa*, 51.
6. In the months just after the article was published, the college received forty or fifty letters of inquiry a day, but letters and applications from students who had read it consistently arrived for many years. Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (1972; repr. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 119.
7. Louis Adamic, "Education on a Mountain: The Story of Black Mountain College," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1936, 520.
8. Ibid., 522.
9. Ibid., 523.
10. Ibid., 525.
11. See Duberman, *Black Mountain*. Martin Duberman's book was a watershed volume for several reasons. The timing was fortuitous: the book was published in 1972, in the midst (or the aftermath depending on what periodization one prefers) of the 1960s experiments in alternative lifestyles, neo-avant-garde practices, radical politics, and the nascent women's and gay-rights movements. Black Mountain College seemed an apt prototype for the playing out of many of these ideas. The book is also legendary because of the manner in which Duberman wrote it. Suspect of grandiose historical truths, Duberman was engaged in his own experiment: how to write a history that acknowledged the personal investments of the historian and showed how those investments shape the historian's account. Duberman frequently inserted the first-person voice, for example, sometimes even imagining himself part of the faculty meetings he summarizes. At times wonderful and at others maddening, the text remains fascinating regarding the role of the historian in the process of history making. The book, and its subject, became somewhat mythological in part because Duberman, in keeping with his insistence on the role of the first person, wrote the volume as an openly gay man, a brave act in 1972 and one that positions the volume within the history of gay rights as much as it does within the legacy of Black Mountain College.

top Picnic to celebrate the visit of Aldous Huxley, 1937, with John Evarts, Anne Chapin Weston, John Rice, Huxley (facing away from the camera in the foreground), and Barbara Dreier.
bottom John Rice and students at work, n.d. Photo by Helen Post Modley.

3

JOHN RICE

We must realize that the world as it is isn't worth saving;
it must be made over.

—John Rice[12]

In 1933, when Ruth Asawa was seven years old, John Rice, a classics professor at the conservative Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, was dismissed from his duties. Then, as now, the firing of tenured professors made the national news. The president of Rollins would not be persuaded to change his mind—not by the press, not by the findings of an independent review that exonerated Rice of any improprieties, and not by the resignations of fellow faculty in solidarity with Rice. The deed was done, and Rice—a maverick teacher who had disapproved of debating "because it encouraged the participants to try to win rather than search for the truth,"[13] an instructor who encouraged his students to put "rights above duties"[14]—found himself with radical ideas and no job.

Some of Rice's students felt that the Rollins administration had soured against them, and they quit the school, joining the faculty who had resigned in solidarity with Rice to persuade him to start a new college, one rooted in the principles of progressive education that he had espoused. One of those faculty members was Theodore Dreier, a physics teacher from an affluent New York family; his aunt was Katherine Dreier, an art collector and cofounder, with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, of the Société Anonyme, which organized lectures, concerts, publications, and exhibitions of the most advanced art of the day. Theodore Dreier's colleague Robert Wunsch, a drama teacher, suggested that the new school could be established on the grounds of a Christian summer camp called the Blue Ridge Assembly in North Carolina. The buildings were large and stood empty except during the summer months. Dreier was close to members of the Forbes family, who, on hearing of the plan to create a new school, committed ten thousand dollars to the enterprise. Black Mountain College was born.

In the beginning, there were twenty-two students. The faculty decided not to have a board of trustees, meaning that they and the students effectively owned the school. Given the meager funds, several faculty members took room and board as their sole compensation. Decisions were made in the Quaker meeting style, meaning the community achieved consensus on an issue by speaking in turn and elected representatives subsequently implemented those decisions.[15] It was determined that the students and faculty would live and eat together. They would serve one another meals, and students would work in the kitchen and on the grounds to offset their tuition. They were to be a community as much as they were to be a school. They meant to exemplify progressive education's most prominent theorist and advocate John Dewey's mantra "learning by doing." It was a grand experiment.

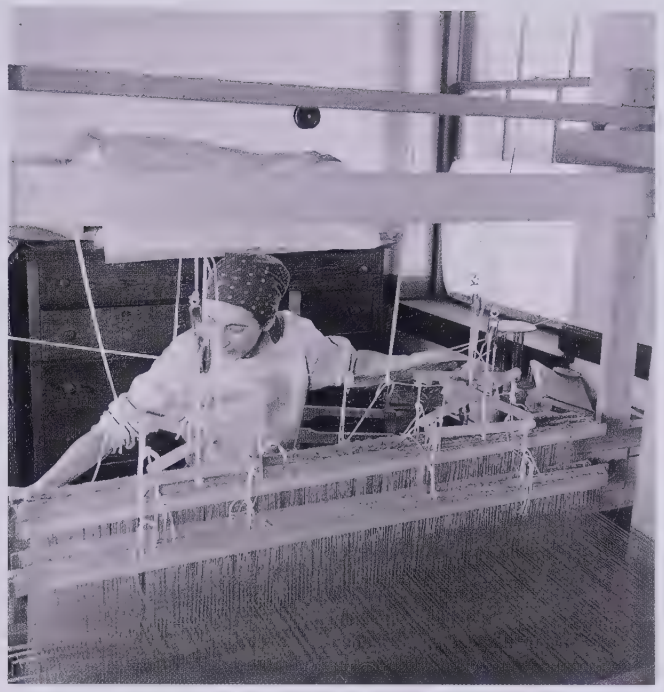
The Western Regional Archives of North Carolina, where the Black Mountain College papers are held, contain several photos of Rice. We chose two. In one, he is at a picnic convened to celebrate Aldous Huxley's visit to campus. Round, wire-rimmed glasses sit on his full face, giving him the owl-like appearance stereotypical of academics. Surrounded by students and trees, he is in animated conversation with Huxley. In another, taken by Helen Post Modley, he sits leisurely in the background, gazing off into the distance, arms folded in his lap, smiling. In the foreground, we see a young man and a woman:

The boy is shirtless, with a pickax and broken stones at his feet. It is simultaneously an image of maturity and gender parity, relaxation and work. At the time the picture was taken, Rice was about forty-eight years old, the age I am as I write this essay. Yet, in comparison with the students, he looks like a grandfather. "We should realize that there is a wisdom of youth as well as a wisdom of old age."[16]

Ironically, Rice, a man who knew little about art and knew no artists personally before founding Black Mountain, insisted that art be at the center of the curriculum. Refusing its typical designation as extracurricular, he felt that art "should no longer have a precarious existence on the fringe of the curriculum but . . . should be at the very center of things."[17] According to Rice, "There are things to be learned through observation [that] cannot be learned any other way. Whatever cannot be expressed in words cannot be learned through words."[18] Rice felt that art not only occupies a possible zone outside of language but also holds the potential to enable individuals to make choices—and choices, he stressed, were at the heart of a truly democratic society. The arts, he felt, "when properly employed [are] least subject to direction from without and yet have within them a severe discipline of their own."[19] Martin Duberman elegantly summarizes Rice's thinking when he suggests that learning art taught students "that the worthwhile struggle was the interior one—not against one's fellows, but against one's 'own ignorance and clumsiness.' The integrity an artist learns when dealing with materials translates into an integrity with oneself and other men."[20]

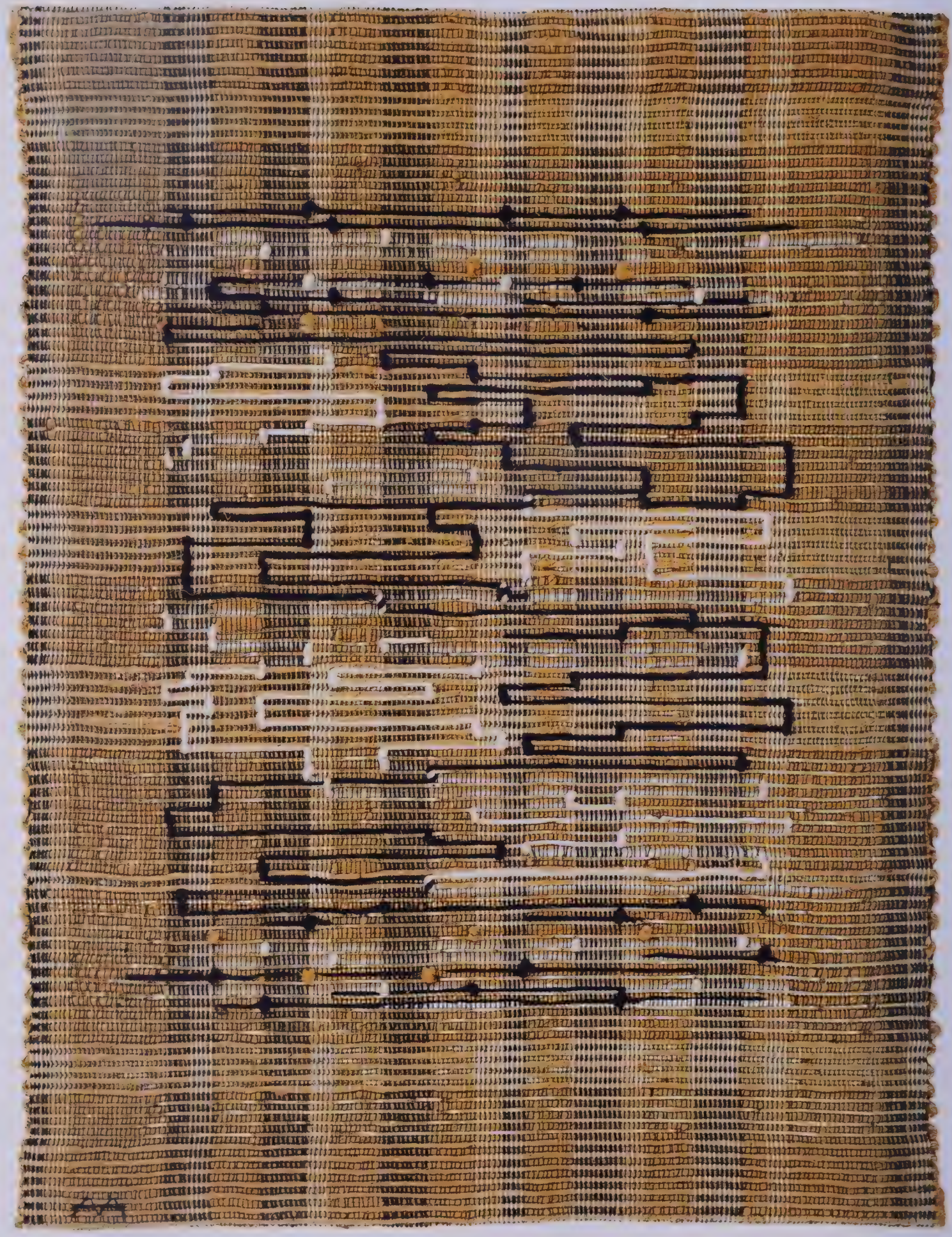
4
ANNI ALBERS

In 1938, Anni Albers drafted an essay called "Work with Material" that appeared in the *Black Mountain College Bulletin*. She had arrived at Black Mountain five years earlier, an accomplished weaver, a former Bauhaus student, a Jewish-born refugee of Hitler's Germany, and the wife of artist Josef Albers. She was also a writer, a skill honed at the Bauhaus, where she wrote articles about the school for popular magazines. "Work with Material" might have been a manifesto in more strident hands, but Albers makes her points plainly and subtly: "Material, that is to say unformed or unshaped matter, is the field where authority blocks independent experimentation less than in many other fields, and for this reason it seems well fitted to become the training ground for invention and free speculation."[21] It seems like formalism, until you realize that for Albers "authority" is hardly an abstract value and "independent experimentation" is not an anodyne virtue. Working with materials was a way of "being close to the stuff the world is made of" and a way to have "faith in one's own strength." Materials were an "adventure" because they introduced "boundaries for a task of free imagination." Threads, yarn, fibers, arranged via warp and weft, were Albers's materials. Traditional functional woven objects, such as tablecloths and upholstery, were augmented by Albers's foray into experiments



top: Anni Albers at the loom, n.d.
bottom: Trude Guermonprez, *First Snow*, n.d. Cotton and wool, 75 x 42 ½ inches.

12. John Rice, quoted in Adamic, "Education on a Mountain," 519.
13. Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 2.
14. Ibid., 4.
15. See ibid., 22.
16. John Rice, "Fundamentalism and the Higher Learning," *Harper's Magazine*, May 1937, 592.
17. John Rice, quoted in Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 38.
18. Rice, "Fundamentalism and the Higher Learning," 595.
19. Ibid.
20. Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 40.
21. Anni Albers, "Work with Material," reprinted in *Selected Writings on Design*, ed. Brenda Danilowitz (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 7.



Anni Albers, *Black-White-Gold I*, 1950. Cotton, jute, and metallic ribbon, 25 x 19 inches.

with pictorial weavings meant to hang on a wall with all the authority and self-consciousness of painting. While at Black Mountain, from 1933 to 1948, she both established the weaving program and made some of her most ambitious works.

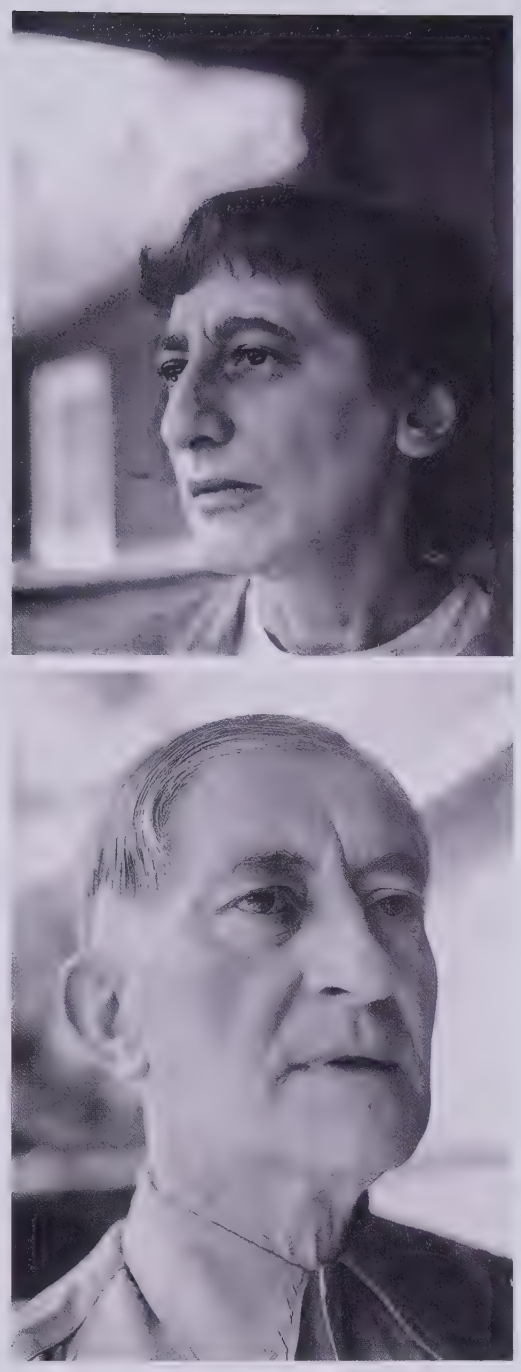
It's safe to say that nothing influenced Albers more than her trips to Mexico—seven in total during her years at the college. Her exposure to contemporary Mexican and pre-Columbian textiles shaped her approach to weaving and, by extension, materials. Confronted with a culture that did not possess written language, she was convinced that Andean and Mayan textiles were a form of sophisticated communication.[22] In her pictorial weavings *Monte Albán* (page 149) and *Ancient Writing* (both produced at Black Mountain in 1936), she explored nonlinguistic forms such as hieroglyphs, pictograms, and abstract shapes. She did so by deploying a technique she had seen in Meso-American textiles, a floating weft—a weave in which an extra horizontal (weft) thread is picked up and pulled across the weaving. Since it serves no structural purpose, it can be used for remarkable decorative effects, and Albers used this technique "to 'draw' lines on the surface of the woven structure."[23] Albers did not think the cultures and the artifacts she was encountering were primitive; instead, they prompted her to write, "We easily forget the amazing discipline of thinking that man had already achieved four thousand years ago. Wherever meaning has to be conveyed by form alone, where for instance, no written language exists to impart descriptively such meaning, we find a vigor in this direct, formative communication often surpassing that of cultures that have other, additional methods of transmitting information."[24]

5
JOSEF ALBERS

We do not always create "works of art," but rather experiments; it is not our ambition to fill museums: we are gathering experience.
—Josef Albers[25]

While Black Mountain founder John Rice didn't personally know any artists, he did have entrée to the higher echelon of the Museum of Modern Art and an auspicious fifteen-minute meeting with philanthropist Edward Warburg and the young curator of architecture Philip Johnson. After listening to Rice's dream of a liberal arts college that would place the arts at the center of its curriculum, Johnson felt he had the right man for the job: Josef Albers, the legendary art teacher at the Bauhaus (the most famous art school of the first half of the twentieth century), which had recently closed to avoid accepting Nazi teachers. Albers was fresh out of a job and, further compounding matters, his wife, Anni, a distinguished alumna and Bauhaus instructor, was Jewish. Rice sent a telegram to Albers inviting him to teach, to which Albers famously replied, "I don't speak English." Rice, equally famously, responded, "Come anyway." Theodore Dreier, always more pragmatic than Rice, wrote the Albers couple a long letter in German, explaining the college, its philosophy, its stature, and its limited financial resources. Tickets were booked, transatlantic travel was undertaken, and on December 5, 1933, Josef and Anni Albers arrived in Asheville, North Carolina, fresh from Berlin, to start their new lives.

22. Virginia Gardner Troy, *Anni Albers and Ancient American Textiles: From Bauhaus to Black Mountain* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 119.
23. Ibid., 117.
24. Anni Albers, *On Weaving*, cited in ibid., 122.
25. Josef Albers, quoted in Leah Dickerman, "Bauhaus Fundaments," in *Bauhaus 1919–1933: Workshops for Modernity* (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 17.



top Hazel Larsen Archer, *Anni Albers*, c. 1948. Gelatin silver print, 9 x 6 ¼ inches.
bottom Hazel Larsen Archer, *Josef Albers*, c. 1948. Gelatin silver print, 8 ½ x 5 ⅞ inches.

No decision was more fateful for the course of Black Mountain College than the arrival of Josef and Anni Albers. Josef had already encountered the philosophy of John Dewey, whose book *Democracy and Education* was translated into German in 1916. A gifted and experienced teacher, he had begun teaching art at an elementary school before becoming the primary instructor of the Preliminary Course (*Vorkurs*) at the Bauhaus from 1923 to 1933. Albers imported the tripartite structure of the Bauhaus fundamentals course—consisting of drawing, color, and work with materials and forms—to Black Mountain. His work began immediately, with Anni acting as his translator until his English improved. After a few years, Anni established a weaving studio and commenced working and teaching alongside Josef.

One of the hallmarks of Albers's teaching was his assignment of uniform class exercises in color, design, and *matière* (material studies), which would be followed by class discussions. All students were asked to perform the same assignments. How

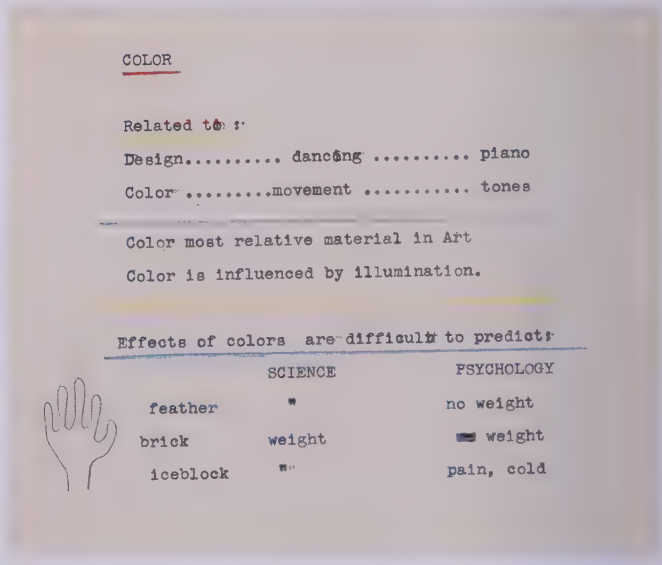
Josef Albers with students, including Ray Johnson and Hazel Larsen Archer, n.d.

Robert De Niro Sr. with student drawings, c. 1939–40.

the assignments were completed was up to the students, but a rigorous core instruction was at the root of Albers's method. He thought of teaching art as analogous to teaching a language, hence students had to begin with the building blocks of aesthetics; he called drawing, for instance, a "graphic language" that was both a "visual and manual act."[26] His drawing assignments were rudimentary and involved drawing simple forms—such as ellipses and meanders. Repetition was essential, hence one finds pages of student drawings covered with the same form repeated many times over, hovering between idle doodles and allover compositions. Students were asked to draw with their less-dominant hand as a means of alienating themselves from their bodily habits. Self-expression was actively discouraged; for "experience shows that in young people this encourages artistic conceit but hardly results in a solid capability which alone can give the foundation and freedom for more personal work." That, he went on to say, "will develop best afterwards and outside the school."[27] Moreover, there was an overall understanding that though it had placed art at its core of instruction Black Mountain was not an art school; it was a liberal arts college. Rice summed up the concept:

> A beginning is often best made by persuading the student to submit himself to the discipline of one or more of the arts. It is for this reason that no classes are allowed to conflict in the schedule with the elementary courses in Music, Dramatic, or the Fine Arts. There is no expectation that many students will become artists; in fact the College regards it as a sacred duty to discourage mere talent from thinking itself genius; but there is something of the artist in everyone and the development of this talent, however small, carrying with it a severe discipline of its own, results in the students becoming more sensitive to order in the world and within himself than he can ever be through intellectual effort alone.[28]

In addition to these rudimentary drawing exercises, group discussion was a key element of Albers's classes. Completed exercises were placed on the floor to be critiqued by both students and Albers. Looking, handwork, and critical assessment were the backbone of the Albers pedagogic method. It sounds rigid—and Albers had long had a reputation as a disciplinarian—but the open and ethical qualities of Albers's teaching remain one of his most compelling legacies, and nowhere is this more evident than in his color exercises.[29] He felt that color was "the most relative medium in art,"[30] and his systematic explorations of color, which involved testing one color against another and subtly shifting a color's context, elucidate how perception is radically contingent. This idea may at first seem counterintuitive, since color surrounds us and our agreement on its nature (leaves are green, the sky is blue) seems as putatively straightforward as our understanding the distinction between land and sea. But Albers's color course, during which pieces of colored paper were cut up and collaged in various ways, proved that the experience of color was ultimately fungible. A piece of blue paper looks and behaves one way when placed on a red background and utterly differently when placed on a green background. The piece of paper has remained the same,

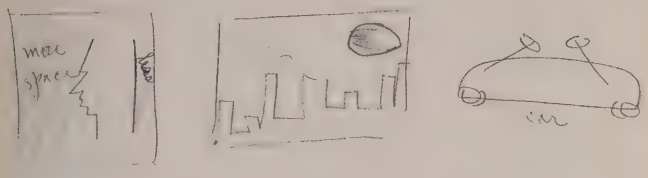


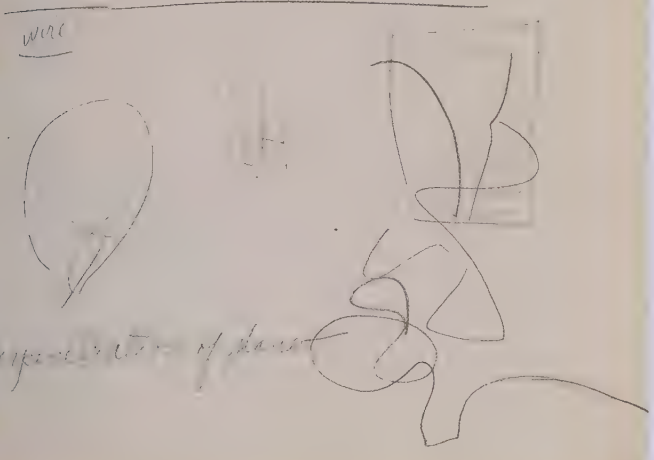
Detail of a page from student John Urbain's notebook, n.d. Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

26. Josef Albers, "Concerning Art Instruction," *Black Mountain College Bulletin*, no. 2 (1934): 4.
27. Ibid.
28. John Andrew Rice, "Black Mountain College," *Black Mountain College Bulletin* (1935); cited in Jonathan Hiam, "Music at Black Mountain College: The European Years, 1939–46," PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2005, 27.
29. Eva Díaz examines the ethics of Albers pedagogy in "The Ethics of Perception: Josef Albers in the United States," *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 2 (June 2008): 260–85.
30. Elaine de Kooning, "Albers Paints a Picture," *ArtNews* 49, no. 7 (November 1950): 57.

II 8/1/46 Design 13

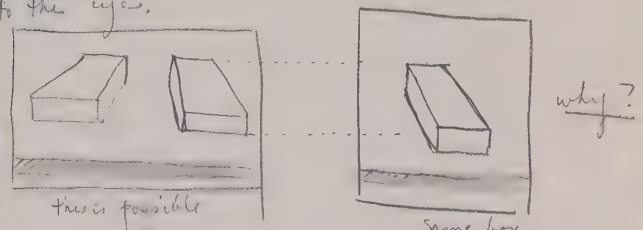
Meaning of form .. not constant for change.

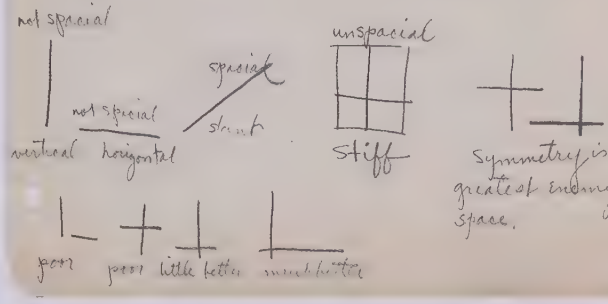




8/1/46 Design II

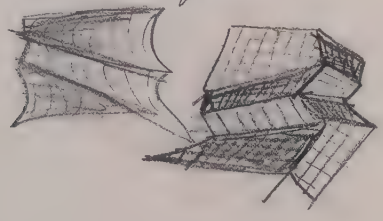
larger
nearer (with it's own relationship)
angles are more obtuse when object is closer to the eye.



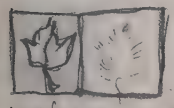


8/20/46 Design II 35

Do less in order to get more -
white net material twisted into voluminous forms.



Leaves -



real leaf | suggested outline with strips of paper (green)

Matière

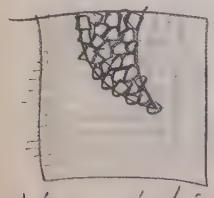
Textures

String - brush strokes
matting - wings
rice
Seeds

mica
corn silk
hay
tobacco

combining photographs -
people appear as screen - snow appears as graphic

screen pulled into 3 dimensions



holes punched in a screen to make it appear as 2 different materials -

Josephine Levine's notes from Josef Albers's color and design class at the 1946 Summer Art Institute. Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina.

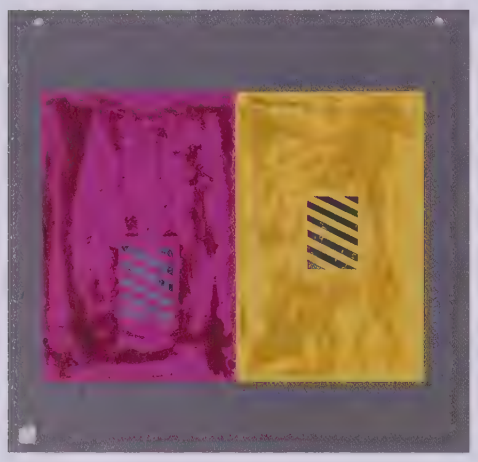
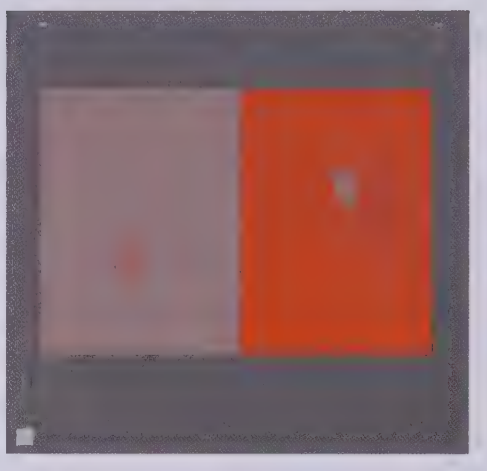
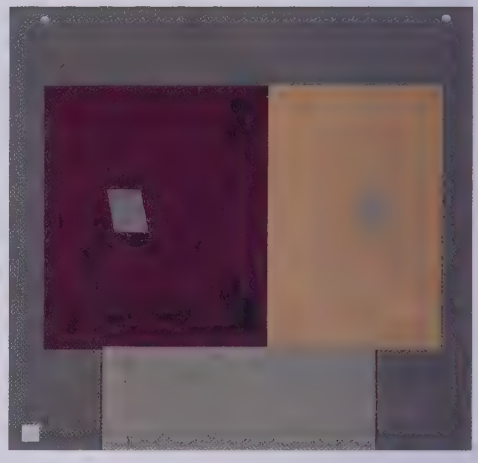
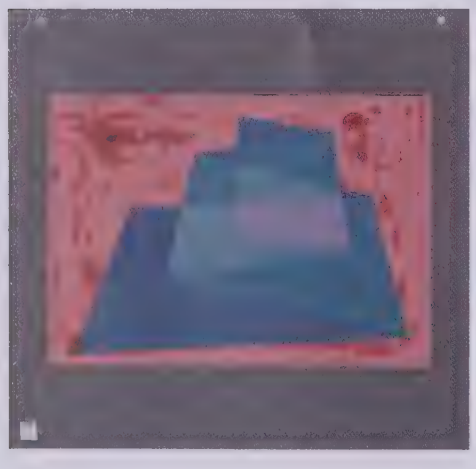
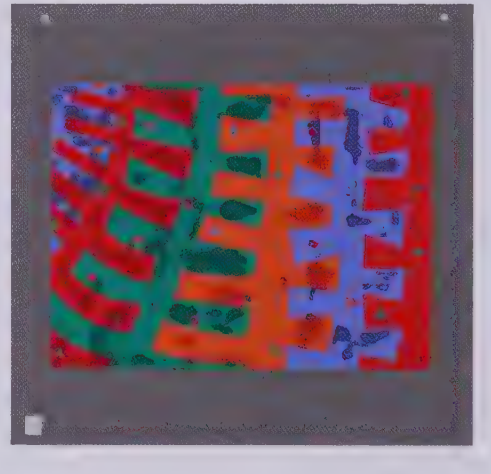
This exhibit presents only one phase of the study of color which is given as a year course at BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE, Black Mountain, N.C. Other areas include: Thematic Free Studies, Objective and Non-objective Color Sketches, Practical Application (i.e., to weaving, ceramics), and a course — "Color and Man", which is a study of the use and concept of color from pre-history to the present.

1. COLOR CHANGE; a choice of two backgrounds and a single, flexible color. This superimposed color takes on a different complexion depending upon the background's influence. The grays are the same.
2. COLOR CHANGE; here the single imposed trapezoid of color tends to look like the opposite background. It is an independent color.
3. COLOR CHANGE; Two unlike colors tend to look the same depending on the affecting backgrounds. Their comparative identity is revealed under the flap.
4. COLOR in LIGHT & SHADE; From four arbitrary colors there is derived a repeat at another proportionate value level.
5. TRANSPARENCY; an illusion of transparent colors producing still other colors when overlapping done with opaque construction and coated papers.
6. TRANSPARENCY; same as 5 except that the illusion is enhanced by using glossy opaque paper.
7. COLOR LAYERS; using the idea of a transparent ribbon or gelatine folded over and over upon itself, changing as the layers increase.
8. VIBRATION; colors selected having a brilliance and an opposing hue which, because of the eye's desire for relief, appear to shift and form outlines in foreign colors.
9. COLOR CHANGE; the same idea as expressed in 1 and 2. Here black becomes green.
10. COLOR INFLUENCES SIZE & SHAPE; the light grays are identical in size and shape, but appear unlike because of color and placement.

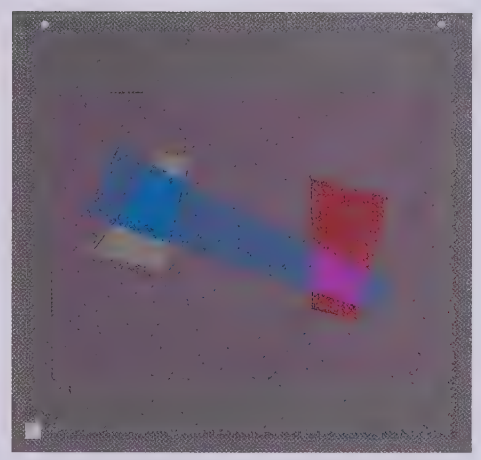
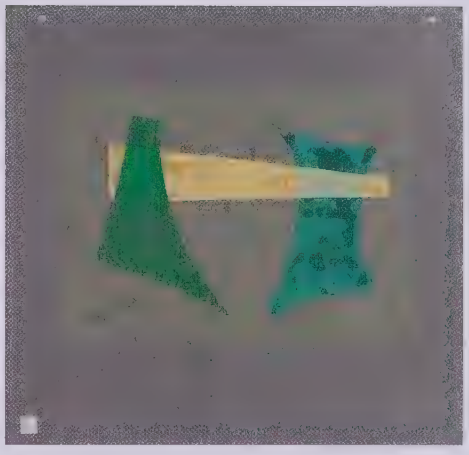
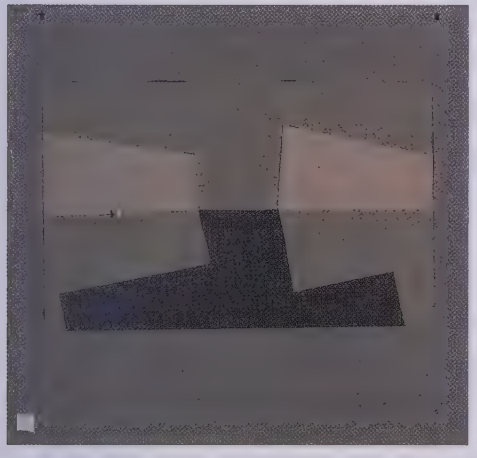
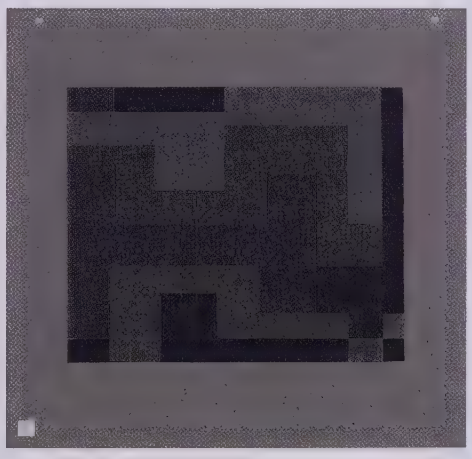
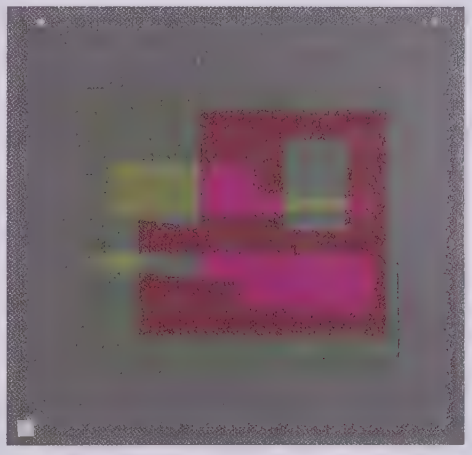
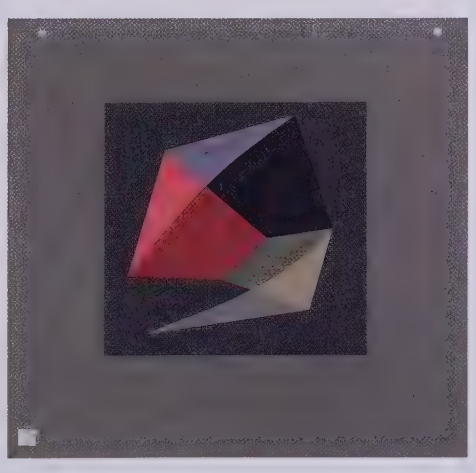
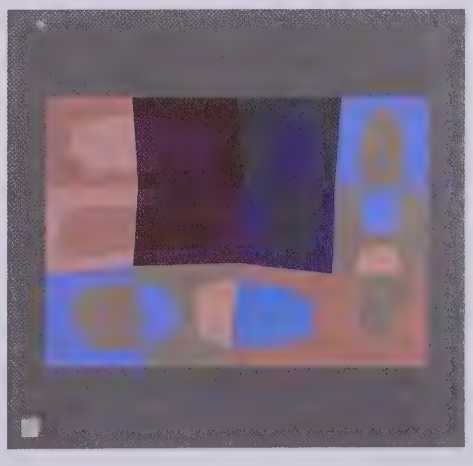
FREE STUDIES; (not especially pointing up any of the single color effects, but possibly including them or developing from them).

11. There are blacks and blacks.
12. Planes, space, and penetration
13. Planes and volume
14. Close values (casein)

W.P. JENNERJAHN, COLOR & DESIGN

W. Pete Jennerjahn, *Color and Design: Color Study Demonstration of Principles*, n.d.
3 printed text panels and 14 panels of collaged Color-aid paper on board,
14 x 14 ¾ inches each.

Above: Jacqueline Gourevitch, *Window and Sun*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 34 x 28 inches.
Opposite, top: Don Alter, *Transformation*, 1949. Casein on paper, 5 ¼ x 8 inches.
Opposite, bottom: Don Alter, *Construction*, n.d. Collage on paper, 8 ½ x 7 ½ inches.

Josef Albers, *b and p*, 1937. Oil on Masonite, 23 ⅞ x 23 ¾ inches.

Josef Albers's color-theory class at the 1944 Summer Art Institute.
Photo by Josef Breitenbach.

but our perception of it is completely different. The implications of this exercise are (at least) twofold: Albers's students learned, first, that color, like drawing, is a building block of aesthetic experience, and, second, that they could control and deploy the various effects of color combinations in their own work. Color's "clinical" deployment was a crucial aspect of Albers's desire to teach his students the fundamentals of picture making. If drawing is a graphic "language" then perhaps color occupies the realm of adjectives or adverbs.

The relativity of our experience of color has philosophical and ethical implications, as well. If our experience of a piece of colored paper can change so demonstrably, then what sure footing do we have when we appeal to "common-sense" truths like color? How are we to proceed in the wake of such profound relativity? Albers was emphatic in his own work that "*there is no final solution in form; thus form demands unending performance* and invites constant consideration—visually as well as verbally."[31] The statement is worthy of unpacking. Albers insisted that "every form has meaning," by which I understand him to mean that there is no "content" or subject matter without form. That form—color, line, shape—is a given, as if in a geometry proof. But unlike a given in a mathematical proof, these forms are subject to perception—what Albers called *experience*. If form so intimately relates to perception, then its meanings and/or effects are capable of great transformations through context. Meaning and experience are then also relative. Their relativity mandates the ethical position of "unending performance" and "constant consideration." If there can be no "final solution," a turn of phrase that Albers could hardly have been immune to, then there can be no absolute version of truth, because our perceptual apparatus does not allow it. The task of training students to see, "to open eyes," as Albers often said, was to facilitate their critical awareness of the made qualities of the world around them, to make them self-aware of their own experiences to better prepare them for the democratic work of making considered choices.

Albers's interest in perception could be seen in his own work, as well as in his class assignments. Elaine de Kooning felt that Albers was "a master of optical illusion," because he would "try to make a ruled line look bent or a flat color seem modeled."[32] He did so in part to test repeatedly the act of making against the act of perceiving. This was exactly what was at stake in the *matière* studies, for which students were tasked with making one material look like another, such as making a cigarette ash resemble a rock. In this regard, Albers was not a staunch modernist, at least not in the vein of Clement Greenberg, who was in the midst of formulating a modernism of pure opticality. Rather Albers insisted on the relativity of color, the perceptual instability of human experience, and the need for a constant performance or testing of innumerable variables.[33]

His Variant works (see page 148) and, certainly, his lifelong project *Homage to the Square* put him at the crux of the shift from modernism (with its fidelity to medium, its shoring up of grand narratives, its belief in verifiable truths) to postmodernism (with its embrace of interdisciplinarity, its sense of the irresolvable and the definitively unfinished, and its eschewing of moral truths in favor of situational ethics). I'm not at all sure that Albers would have agreed with—let alone relished—his role in this shift, which is perhaps the dilemma of any extraordinary practitioner who straddles, by virtue of generational accident and world-transforming events, movements within *Kunstwollen*.[34] But his young student Robert Rauschenberg—whose work prompted critic Leo Steinberg to first use the term *postmodernism* in arts criticism—recognized it. Rauschenberg later recalled, "When Albers showed me that one color was as good as another and that you were just expressing a personal preference if you thought a certain color would be better, I found that I couldn't decide to use *one* color instead of another, because I really wasn't interested in taste."[35]

6
SUMMER

In 1937, the college purchased property three miles away from the Blue Ridge Assembly, around the manmade and lyrically named Lake Eden. The acres of farm- and woodland that bordered the lake were dotted with rustic cottages and included a large building with a dining hall. The acquisition facilitated two of what would become defining characteristics of the Black Mountain experience: the building and work programs and the summer sessions. No longer renters, the faculty started to dream of a more permanent, year-round existence for the college. Bauhaus architects Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer were asked to design plans for the new campus. Cost prohibitive, those plans were never realized. Ultimately the well-regarded editor of the *Architectural Record*, A. Lawrence Kocher, joined the faculty as resident architect and promptly began designing and constructing, with the help of the students, the main building on campus—the Studies Building.

31. Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color* (1963; repr. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 73; cited in Eva Díaz, "Experiment, Expression, and the Paradox of Black Mountain College," in *Starting at Zero: Black Mountain College, 1933–57* (Bristol: Arnolfini, and Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, 2005), 45. Emphasis added.
32. De Kooning, "Albers Paints a Picture," 41.
33. Elaine de Kooning writes, "Thus he considers each painting a variant rather than a final solution, leaving the way open for endless experiment." Ibid., 57.
34. *Kunstwollen*—loosely translated as "the will to art"—is a term derived from the art historian Alois Riegl that signifies the tendency in an age toward a given style or form, which may happen with or without the intention of the individual artist.
35. Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors* (New York: Viking, 1965), 199–200. For Leo Steinberg on postmodernism, see Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 55–92.

top Heinrich Jalowetz in concert with Frederick Cohen, c. 1942–44. Photo by Will Hamlin.
bottom 1944 Summer Art Institute faculty, with José de Creeft, Jean Charlot, Amédée Ozenfant, Bernard Rudofsky, and Josef Albers. Photo by Tom Milius.

This new, permanent home meant that the students and faculty no longer had to vacate for the summer months. In 1944, Heinrich Jalowetz, the much-beloved music teacher, organized a summer music institute in honor of composer Arnold Schoenberg's seventieth birthday. Jalowetz had been one of Schoenberg's "most admired students"[36] and "was probably the single most beloved figure in Black Mountain's history."[37] Jalowetz (or "Jalo," as he was called) had been a prominent conductor in Europe but in 1933 was forced from his Cologne post as part of a Nazi purge. He spent six more years in Europe before deciding to leave for the open position at Black Mountain. He arrived in 1939 with his wife, Johanna, who taught bookbinding and voice. While there, Jalowetz prepared a two-piano arrangement of Schoenberg's 1942 *Ode to Napoleon*,[38] a late work for string quartet, piano, and reciter that Schoenberg explicitly produced as an "anti-Hitler" work, stating: "I knew it was the moral duty of intelligentsia to take a moral stand against tyranny."[39]

The 1944 Summer Music Institute—dedicated to the theme of "interpretation"—turned Black Mountain into a mecca for Schoenberg studies. Jalowetz opened the session by advocating for the role music could play in "the stupendous task of reconstructing our shaken world," and the work of music in opposition to tyranny was amplified in Rudolf Kulish's course Democratic Practices of Ensemble Playing.[40] Josef Albers invited visual artists to be present that summer, many of whom were also European: photographer Josef Breitenbach; sculptor José de Creeft; French expatriot and assistant to Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, Jean Charlot; French critic and painter Amédée Ozenfant; and Bernard Rudofsky, who taught clothing design in advance of his invention of the perennially popular Bernardo sandal. Gropius came to give lectures, as did the directors of education at the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art.

These art sessions flourished in subsequent summers, bringing an influx of new students, specifically art students. New faculty, hired especially for the summer, also immeasurably energized the college. The summer sessions and their rosters of impressive teachers, more than anything else, consolidated Black Mountain's identity as an art school, even though, in fact, it was not one. The summer sessions permitted an extraordinary form of cross-pollination. Many students and faculty who attended the summer sessions returned to their hometowns and institutions with tales of the intellectual and aesthetic permissiveness and freedom that permeated the school. New York School painter Jack Tworkov summed it up in a letter to his sister and her husband:

> This place is apt to do more for my education than I can do for the students here. Would take a very long letter to describe this place. It is in the mountains and the landscape is superb. It is a very good place to spend the summer. But it is not in the physical aspects of this place that is [*sic*] interesting. But a principle of community living and education that I have heard about but never saw put in practice. These people are willing to take the consequences of what they preach—which is most unusual. In essence there exists the utmost freedom for people to be what they please. There is simply no pattern of behavior, no criteria to live up to. People study what they please, as long as they want to, idle if they want to, graduate whenever they are willing to stand on examination, even after only a month here, or a year, or whatever, or they can waive all examinations, and graduations. They can attend classes, or stay away. They can work entirely by themselves, or they need not work whatever. They can be male, female, or fairy, married, single, or live in illicit love. The instructors can hold classes or tutor individually, meet their classes as often or as little as they want to. Yet much work is being done here. There are wonderful scholars, artists, and musicians here. There is a quality of good manners, not based on formal behavior, that is impressive, gentle and sweet.[41]

There would be many legendary summers at Black Mountain: In 1946, Albers invited the painter Jacob Lawrence, who came with his wife, the artist Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence; the sculptor Lee Amino; the photographers Nancy and Beaumont Newhall; the woodworker Molly Gregory; and Gropius. The faculty roster for the summer of 1948 alone ensured the mythic status of Black Mountain—including, as it did, Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Merce Cunningham, John Cage, R. Buckminster Fuller, Peter Grippe, and Richard Lippold, among others. That summer, the student body swelled to seventy-seven students, many there courtesy of the GI Bill. Almost none of the summer faculty was

36. Martin Brody, "The Scheme of the Whole: Black Mountain and the Course of American Modern Music," in *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, ed. Vincent Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 246.
37. Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 172.
38. Author's notes from presentation by Martin Brody at a Black Mountain College roundtable, February 21–22, 2014, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.
39. Arnold Schoenberg, "How I Came to Compose the Ode to Napoleon," reprinted in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 2, no. 1 (1977): 55. Cited in Hiam, "Music at Black Mountain College," 49.
40. See Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 94.
41. Jack Tworkov, *The Extreme of the Middle: Writings of Jack Tworkov*, ed. Mira Schor (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 285.

Amédée Ozenfant, *The Sleeping Canyon*, 1945–46. Oil on canvas on Masonite, 52 x 39 inches.

Peter Grippe, *Man with Hammer*, 1941. Terra-cotta, 14 x 10 x 15 inches
José de Creeft, *The Cloud*, 1939. Stone, 13 7/8 x 12 3/8 x 8 1/4 inches.

1946 Summer Art Institute faculty, with (left to right) Leo Amino, Jacob Lawrence, Leo Lionni, Theodore Dreier, Nora Lionni, Beaumont Newhall, Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, Ise Gropius, Jean Varda, Nancy Newhall, Walter Gropius, Molly Gregory, Josef Albers, and Anni Albers.

paid a salary but received instead room and board and some relaxing time in the country. In the background, there was considerable faculty strife, alliances had been formed, grudges established, and the utopian idealism of the early days was starting to fade.[42] But the summer sessions continued, and efforts were made to suspend disagreements during the summer period when the campus was flooded with guests and students.

In 1949, Albers asked Fuller to convene a group of teachers for the summer, and Fuller obliged by inviting painter Emerson Woelffer and his wife, the photographer Dina Woelffer; Nataraj Vashi and his wife, Pra-Veena, came to teach Indian dance and philosophy; and the husband-and-wife team Jano and John Walley taught ceramics, jewelry, and the basic arts classes. All came from the Institute of Design in Chicago—a school founded by László Maholy-Nagy that had largely been modeled after the Bauhaus. Other sessions consolidated around a particular medium, such as that of 1951, when photographers Harry Callahan, Arthur Siegel, and Aaron Siskind came together. Such focus inspired the fall 1952 Pottery Seminar, which hosted British ceramist Bernard Leach; Bauhaus potter Marguerite Wildenhain; Japanese curator and historian Sōetsu Yanagi; and Shōji Hamada, a potter who would go on to become a Living National Treasure of Japan.

The list of impressive proper names continues, and the archival record is filled with fleeting glances of people who were not yet famous but were in the early days of shaping their chosen medium, of profoundly challenging the forms inherent to it, artists who were in the process of becoming the historical personages we now accept them to be. What is perhaps more remarkable than the names themselves is the constellation of ideas and intimacies Black Mountain made possible. Unlike the Bauhaus, which offered training explicitly aimed at producing a working artist, Black Mountain College was looser when it came to the relations between cause and effect. The faculty, in its heterogeneity, produced a set of what historian Ernst Bloch would call "conditions" rather than espousing a pedagogy that would be the "cause" whose "effect" would produce a certain "type" of student. Bloch, in a valiant attempt to render the Hegelian drive toward progress more nuanced, suggests that cause and effect are not purely teleological but rather reciprocal, effecting and causing one another in turn ("Causality is in no way static . . . but is a process.")[43] To complicate our too-easy historical model of cause and effect, he offers the idea of conditions, which "set the possible, but they do not do anything. The realization of the possible as something new occurs through the subjective factor working as an active cause in human history."[44] To my ear, this sounds like an apposite description of what happened at Black Mountain College: a set of conditions was established—through the accident of geography, the devastation of world war and its attendant forced migrations and economic hardships, and the coincidence of its attending faculty and students—and the possibilities thus lay *in potentia*.

The summer sessions modeled a form of artistic community, one that de Kooning took with him to New York in 1950, when he helped to found the Artists' Club, a gathering dedicated to the presentation of avant-garde ideas. Albers cast the die strongly with his first invitations. Known as a disciplinarian in the classroom, he was exquisitely catholic in his taste, purposely inviting people whose work was nothing like his own (the Social Realism of Lawrence, the incipient Abstract Expressionism of de Kooning, the whimsy of Lyonel Feininger, the biomorphism of Amino). This kind of heterogeneity continued even after Albers departed Black Mountain, with poet Charles Olson taking the lead in summer invitations, asking dancers as disparate as Cunningham and Katherine Litz, poets as divergent as Robert Duncan and Robert Creeley. Indeed, the practice of inviting guest artists to visit for short teaching stints was to become part of the culture of American art schools for the rest of the twentieth century.[45] Black Mountain helped to establish the idea that an art school is a place of competing and diverse ideas, where the task of the faculty is to commit to a sense of rigor instead of personal taste, and the job of the students is to navigate the complexity of the options, in the hope of finding their own paths through what John Cage called "the big question," namely, "What are you going to do with your time?"[46]

42. As with any small community composed of strong-willed individuals, Black Mountain College was subject to a series of internal schisms—many of which were political in nature, inasmuch as they tended to revolve around issues of leadership and power. Such disagreements were especially charged given the lack of a board of trustees or other form of outside governance. Duberman charts the first series of debates surrounding college founder John Rice's departure from the college in his chapter "Schism," in *Black Mountain*, 114–52. Duberman and Mary Emma Harris each offer accounts of the next major breakdown at the college, which ultimately led to the departures of Theodore Dreier and Josef and Anni Albers. See Duberman, "The Split," in *Black Mountain*, 172–211; and Harris, "Reorganization and Resignation," in *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 164–65.

43. Ernst Bloch, "Causality and Finality as Active, Objectifying Categories (Categories of Transmission)," *Telos*, no. 21 (Fall 1974): 105.

44. Ibid., 104–5.

45. See Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Notably, the California Institute for the Arts (CalArts) and the Bard College MFA program both cite Black Mountain, with its heterogeneity and interdisciplinarity, as a model in their founding.

46. John Cage, interview with Richard Kostelanetz (1968), in *John Cage: An Anthology*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), 28.

John Evarts playing piano, with Josef Albers, seated (with cigarette), at Halloween party, n.d

Saturday night dance in dining hall on Lake Eden campus, c. 1945.

Clemens Kalischer, *Black Mountain College, 1948*, The Ruse of Medusa *by Satie*, 1948. Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection.

7

SELF-ENTERTAINMENT

In 1947, there were forty million radios in the United States and about forty-four thousand television sets (with probably thirty thousand in the New York area alone).[47] Suffice it to say televisions played no role at Black Mountain College, and while there was likely at least one radio on campus, one encounters little evidence of it in the literature or the archive. There was, however, an enormous library of recorded music, which had been given by Thomas Whitney Surette.[48] Student Michael Rumaker recalled his Black Mountain College days as saturated with ambient music, from the sounds of students practicing their instruments to David Tudor teaching himself Pierre Boulez's notoriously difficult Second Piano Sonata, to poet Charles Olson playing a Miles Davis record over and over again.[49]

The role of performance at Black Mountain is typically reduced to the mushroom-like appearance of John Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1*. Widely considered the first Happening, it included almost all of the performative arts: dance, music, and poetry. However, this event, conducted on an August evening in 1952, was one among hundreds of performances. The tradition of the community entertaining itself after dinner was established in the early days of the college, when it occupied the Blue Ridge Assembly. Music instructor John Evarts played "waltzes, polkas, square dances, and other songs" after dinner on Saturday evenings for dances that were attended by faculty and students.[50] During the years before the war, women wore long dresses and men sported suit and tie for these events. Small student-printed announcements publicized recitals that included works by Beethoven, Bach, and Bartók.[51] The Black Mountain community seems to have smoothly moved from high to low culture, not only in music but also in film. According to alumna Jacqueline Gourevitch, the dining hall's furniture was rearranged after dinner for screenings of films ranging from those of Buster Keaton (from which she learned that "a funny thing could be serious") to those of Sergei Eisenstein.[52] Similarly, former student Mary Fiore remembered that she "danced a lot," that photographer Hazel Larsen Archer screened movies borrowed from New York's Museum of Modern Art, and that the "theater was fantastic."[53]

Robert Wunsch, one of the Rollins dissidents to follow Rice to Black Mountain, initiated the theater program.[54] True to the heterogeneity of the college, the theater program also made room for Xanti and Irene Schawinsky's version of Bauhaus theater, with abstract costumes and nonnarrative scripts. Theatrical performances took place throughout the college's existence and ranged from the conventional stage plays of Thornton Wilder and Irving Shaw to avant-garde works such as Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Erik Satie's *The Ruse of Medusa* (with an all-star cast that included R. Buckminster Fuller, Elaine de Kooning, and Merce Cunningham). Students were involved in the creation of both costumes and sets for the theater, and this work blurred into costume parties. Fiore remembers one with a medieval theme. Color slides taken by Josef Albers document costumes for a Valentine's Day ball in 1940 (pages 100–101), and a black-and-white photograph shows Robert Rauschenberg working on a costume for Carnival.

The mutability between art and entertainment, between work and play, was essential, not only because the mission of progressive education was to train democratic citizens capable of "the pursuit of happiness" but also because it allowed for shifting positions between artist and audience. This fluidity suggested that making art was not an isolated activity, nor was membership

in an audience a permanent condition. Rather the move between the two positions (actor and audience) was constitutive of the social fabric in which members have equal and rotating obligations to one another. This quality of life at Black Mountain College echoed through summer-session faculty member Ben Shahn's lecture "The Education of an Artist," when he asked his audience to consider the following question: "Besides the questions of what to paint and how to paint and the one I cannot attempt to answer—how to live—there is a further question which I often ask myself. That is, for whom does one paint?"[55] His answer, oblique as it was, came later in the lecture: "The public function of art has always been one of creating community, that is not necessarily its intention, but it is its result."[56]

8
COSMOPOLITANISM

Black Mountain College is a small cosmopolitan community of students and teachers living together, an education stressing democratic cooperation.

—Black Mountain College brochure[57]

On December 5, 1933, the *Asheville Citizen* ran an image and notice about the recent arrival in town of artists Josef and Anni Albers from Berlin. Anni stands in furs and a cloche hat with a black net veil; Josef looks stunned, his tie as snug as a noose. The picture could have been taken by Grant Wood; a veritable European Gothic. They had landed in the rural American South. Part of the myth of Black Mountain College is that it represents, in microcosm, the historical trajectory of post–World War II art, namely that the concentration of avant-garde art making and theorizing would shift from Europe to America. Threadbare from its retelling, the tale can be found on any average American art historian's bookshelf, in such titles as *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, *The American Century*, and *The Triumph of American Painting*.[58] It's no wonder that the hegemonic bias of this narrative infiltrated the early critical writing on Black Mountain. Mary Emma Harris's still-indispensable *The Arts at Black Mountain College* includes

Germans To Teach Art Near Here

Professor Josef and Frau Albers, above, of Dessau, Germany, where they taught art in the famous Bauhaus school there until Hitler's policies caused it to close recently, this week joined the faculty of Black Mountain college at Blue Ridge to conduct an art department in the college.

Asheville Citizen 12/5/33

Germans On Faculty At Black Mountain School

Josef And Frau Albers Named Instructors In Art There

With Professor Josef and Frau Albers, of Dessau, Germany, as instructors, an art department has been established at Black Mountain college at Blue Ridge near here.

Professor and Frau Albers were until recently members of the faculty of the Bauhaus school in Dessau, which was world famous as an exponent of the international idea of art. The school was forced to close because of the national educational policies of the new Hitler government. The two art teachers were brought to Black Mountain college, the only college in the United States under direct faculty control, by the New York Museum of Art.

Internationally Known

Having served as an instructor of art at the Bauhaus school for the last decade, Professor Albers is internationally known in modern art circles for his glass painting and for his unusual method of art instruction.

Frau Albers is considered an outstanding textile designer of Europe, having taken an active part in the German movement to revive the art of textile weaving. She is noted for using unusual materials in her weaving, especially a synthetic material made largely of straw, which she uses in making tapestries.

At the Bauhaus, the course on "Material Technic," given by Professor Albers, was the only one required of students in all departments—the theater, dance, music, and art. The German professor says that it is his theory that all artistic creation is a kind of "form-giving," and that the floor structure of all creative work is the same. He, therefore, advocates that the art student should choose an art medium for personal expression only after the student has obtained a general education.

"Professor Albers may exert an influence in this country that will fundamentally change present methods of approach to art education," M. M. Warburg, trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, declared in discussing the German artist's ability. Dr. F. R. Georgia, professor of chemistry and president of Black Mountain college, said.

Completes Art Faculty

"Professor Albers' main interest in his work," Mr. Warburg continued, "is the drawing out of creative possibilities in his students by a series of experimental exercises in technic."

The addition of an art department to the newly founded Black Mountain college, which is in its first year of education completes its faculty for arts training. Miss Hilda Loram has charge of the dramatics department of the college and teaches English, and John Evarts is professor of music.

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Page from *Asheville Citizen*, December 5, 1933.

the chapter "An Essentially American Venture," and Martin Duberman's long discussion of the intellectual schisms at Black Mountain often circulates around the purported tensions between the differing values held by the Europeans and the Americans teaching at the college. Such powerful narrations have contributed to the idea that some of Black Mountain's infamous schisms and its ultimate demise came about from the conflicts between an old-world European gentility and a brash, new, self-centered Americanism. How else to explain the school's programmatic evolution: from the full community of students and faculty taking Albers's Friday design course to atomized, one-on-one student visits with such painters as Theodoros Stamos and Jack Tworkov? How better to narrate the divide between Albers's doggedly repetitive class assignments (an example of the European tradition of rote memorization) and the free-form drawings that the Abstract Expressionist painters encouraged (which could be seen as exclusively American)? And how neatly such a framework helps explain how the musical landscape dominated by Beethoven and Schoenberg shifted to the more experimental one that highlighted John Cage's compositions featuring a prepared piano, magnetic tape, and radios. How better to describe the change in the faculty's literary endeavors, from one typified by M. C. Richards's groundbreaking translations of Erik Satie and Antonin Artaud to one characterized by Charles Olson's obsession with his own native fishing town of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and his critical work on Herman Melville?

That such intellectual and pedagogical sea changes were accompanied by a generational shift (Heinrich Jalowetz and Albers were born, respectively, in 1882 and 1888, Olson and Cage in 1910 and 1912) only serves to further consolidate the easy trap of cause and effect this story traffics in so expertly. The notion of America's triumph over Europe more generally inflects other tales about Black Mountain College: for some, it was a utopian community, an idyll of artistic and personal liberties; for others,

47. "History of Television," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_television, accessed August 2014, citing Robert Shagawat, "Television recording—The Origins and Earliest Surviving Live TV Broadcast Recordings," *Early Television Museum*, http://www.earlytelevision.org/pdf/Television_Recording_Origins.pdf.pdf. October 4, 2004, updated April 2011.

48. Thomas Whitney Surette, founder and director of the Concord Summer School of Music, taught briefly at the college and was a member of the advisory council from 1933 until his death in 1941, at which point he willed his entire music library to the college. Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 32.

49. Michael Rumaker, *Black Mountain Days: A Memoir* (2003; repr., New York: Spuyten Duyvil, 2012). Rumaker on Olson and Davis, 162–63; on ambient music, 278–84.

50. See Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 32.

51. For a full accounting of all of the music played in recital at Black Mountain College, see Hiam, "Music at Black Mountain College."

52. Jacqueline Gourevitch, conversation with the author, March 17, 2014, New York.

53. Mary Fiore, conversation with the author, May 20, 2014, New York.

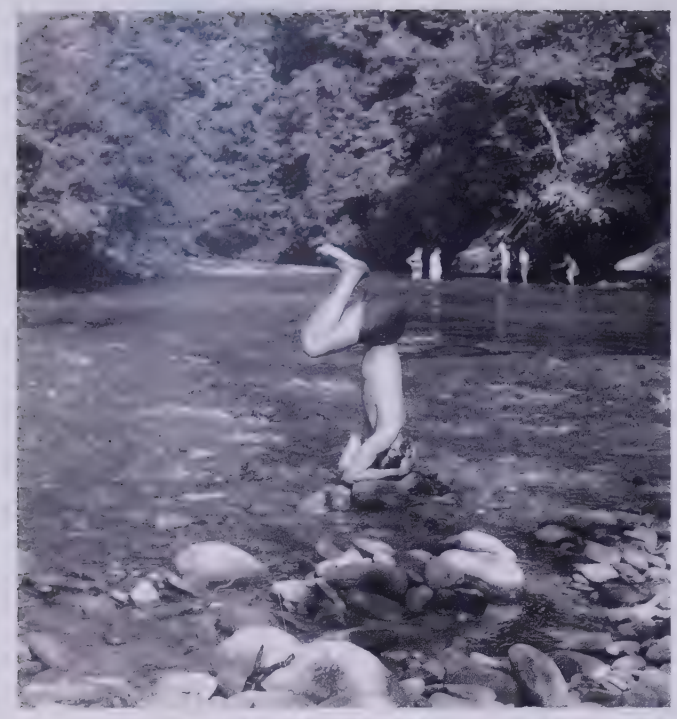
54. The most authoritative account of theater at Black Mountain is that of Harris, in *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 36–46.

55. Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content* (New York: Vintage, 1957), 145. Shahn was on the Black Mountain faculty during the summer session of 1952.

56. Ibid., 150. Shahn goes on to give examples: "the religious community created by one phase of art, the peasant community created by another." If we follow Shahn's logic, then one result of placing art at the center of Black Mountain's curriculum was to create a community of artists who functioned equally as practitioners and audience.

57. Black Mountain College brochure, box 1, folder 3, Mary Caroline Richards Papers, 1898–2007, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

58. Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Barbara Haskell, *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1900–1950* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, in association with Norton, 1999); Lisa Phillips, *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1950–2000* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, in association with Norton, 1999); Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Praeger, 1970).



top The Hindu dance and philosophy instructor Nataraj Vashi practicing yoga, summer 1949. Photo by Masato Nakagawa.
bottom Carlos Mérida on the porch of Lee Hall, spring 1940. Photo by Claude Stoller.

it represents the failure of the utopian dream, its demise proving that academic infighting is the poison that will kill us all. This juxtaposition, with its stark contrasts, neatly reflects a parallel dispute about the American-European post–World War II relationship: one side of that quarrel reasons that an American exceptionalism came to define freedom, tout court, and the other side holds the equally pessimistic view that the American utopian experiment failed because it needed the ballast of old Europe to support its overreaching aims. While it is certainly true that the profound and painful schisms that existed at the college might have been geographically inclined and generationally inflected, I find that another Black Mountain College appears neither idyllic nor failed, when viewed through the lens of cosmopolitanism.

In its early years, Black Mountain College saw its faculty, both in art and the social sciences, grow through the migration of teachers who were escaping the horrors of war-ravaged Europe. That migration to the United States was a forced one, and many of those faculty members looked beneficently on their new country; it had offered them safe haven in a storm. Black Mountain College was suffused by rhetoric about democracy. It was a community dedicated to enabling the critical thinking deemed crucial to the task of performing the duties of democratic citizenship. But it's worth asking what version of community was being modeled. Albers set a strong course by routinely inviting artists who differed from him. So, too, his trips to Mexico with Anni resulted in an open road between Asheville and its even more southern neighbor. News of muralists, archaeological sites, and ideas about design and art traveled back and forth along this route, equally carried by faculty and students. The "Old World" values of Europe met the "New World" values of pre-Columbian Mexico, in a heady mix where ideas such as "form" and "art" were the lingua franca. This cross-cultural exchange happened repeatedly at Black Mountain College; indeed, it could be argued that it typified the Black Mountain experience. Most people who came through Black Mountain College stayed for a year, sometimes a summer, and then moved on. They brought with them news from afar: Willem de Kooning brought the first glimpses of a burgeoning movement in New York; Cage disturbed the Germanic musical imagination with the work of French composer Erik Satie; Nataraj Vashi and Pra-Veena introduced the dance and philosophy of India; Paul Goodman heralded the earliest stirrings of what would become the sexual revolution; Roland Hayes merged classical opera with African-American spirituals; Charles Olson and Ben Shahn brought their shared fascination with coding and decoding, born during their days in the Office of War Information; and Shōji Hamada and Sōetsu Yanagi lectured on Buddhism and the Mingei craft movement from Japan . . . the list goes on. Far from producing a utopian culture of anodyne art-for-art's-sake or fostering the idea that community means a group bound together by similar heritage or shared interests, this mix of individuals privileged the heterogeneity of cultures, ideas, and practitioners.

The question remains: what to make of all of this diversity? Given the intensely discursive nature of life at Black Mountain College, we can assume that the faculty and students weren't interested in difference for its own sake. What then did this concentration on community—extolled in the college's early promotional literature and instantiated in the communal dining room and the work program—and heterogeneity mean? One way to parse the differences between the artists at Black Mountain is to compare two differing examples of their relations to music. For instance, an early college brochure stated, "Black Mountain believes that in a shaken world of ideas, music, as a world of inner order, can help toward developing that community for which we all toil."[59] Later, in the 1950s, composer Stefan Wolpe, a former Bauhaus student who fled Germany and arrived in the US via Russia and Palestine, would write that music as a form served to "make connections, bump against one another" and that it had "immediate, delayed, distant, shifting, single, many, similar, dissimilar, direct, vague, and opposite goals."[60] What appears to be at stake is the role art might play within a community of shared and competing interests and desires. The early Black Mountain text implies that the harmony achieved by music—the coming together in unity of many players in one composition, for instance—is the task of art specifically and of community life more generally. By contrast, Wolpe's diaristic notes imply an interest in the possibility of discord and misalignment. In both quotes, we hear the formal attributes of music and the social dynamics of communal life being analogized to each other, so much so that I find it tempting to read the attributes each writer assigns to music as a description of Black Mountain itself.

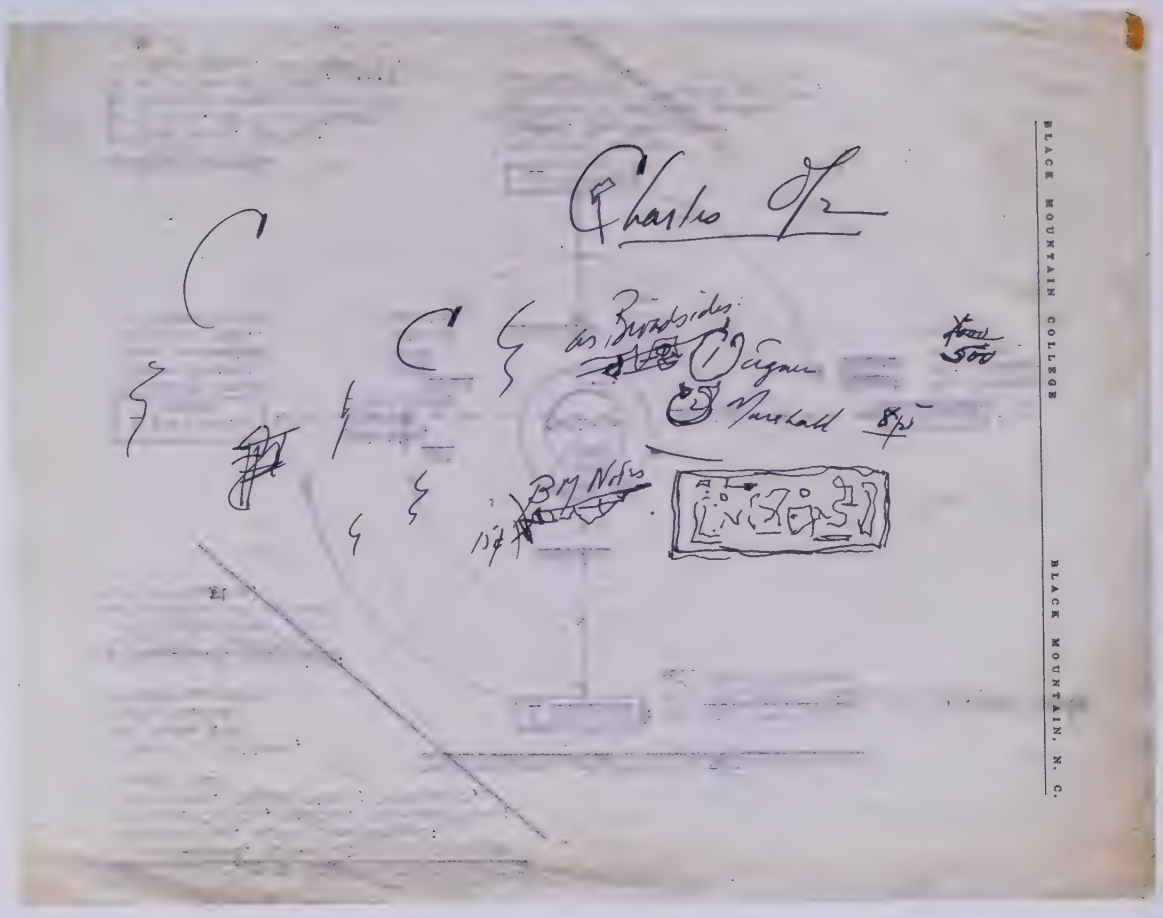
Heinrich Jalowetz working with a student vocalist, n.d.

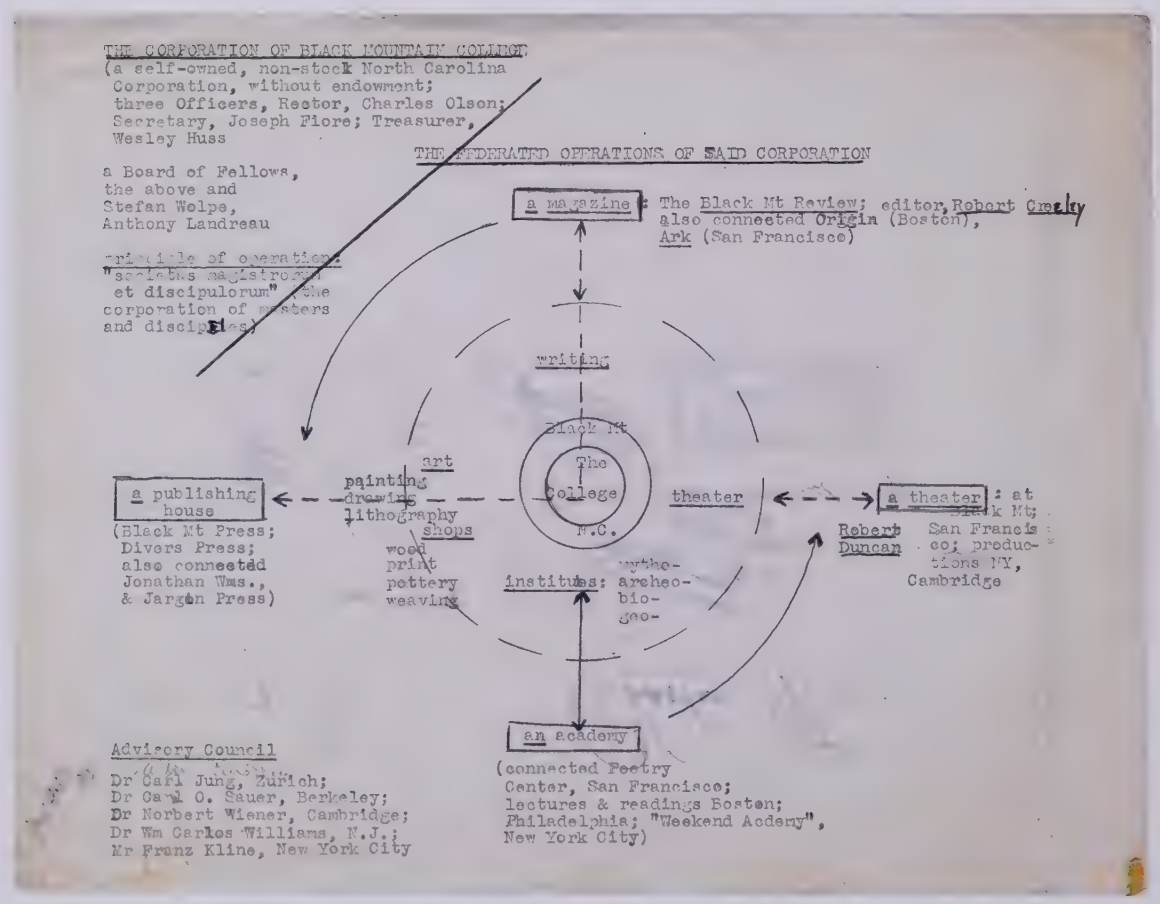
These citations might also point toward another way of parsing the divisions and tensions that occurred at Black Mountain. Rather than seeing these social dynamics as purely geographic or merely generational (though they were both), Wolpe's description of music-as-community can be considered in terms of a shift away from a humanist view of democracy and community to a cosmopolitan perspective on those difficult ideals. Postcolonial theorists have challenged the idea of the cosmopolitan subject as an urban effete who effortlessly traverses national boundaries aided by the ease of class distinction. Rather, they describe a twentieth century distinguished by forced migrations, expatriation, and large diasporic movements. Many scholars have come to see modernism as a way of dealing with the "historical and political transformations of community, transformations that occasioned . . . an almost desperate effort to recoup community in the form of nationalism and facism."[61] In the face of the Nazis' draconian endgame version of "community," cosmopolitanism emerges as an alternative way of thinking about the social fabric, its contracts, and the problems of individuality and belonging. For Kwame Anthony Appiah, the cosmopolitan subject differs from the nationalist subject through a concern with the human rights of all persons, not just the ones like them. Even further, for Appiah, "the humanist requires us to put our differences aside; the cosmopolitan insists that sometimes it is the differences we bring to the table that make it rewarding to interact at all."[62]

The lens of cosmopolitanism allows Black Mountain to be seen less as a failed utopian experiment in community and more as a living example of radical democracy in action, an experiment in the practice of community that requires neither consensus nor harmony. Likewise cosmopolitanism does not imply pure detachment. I have come to see Black Mountain as a site of what Bruce Robbins has called the "reality of (re)attachment, multiple attachment, or attachment at a distance."[63] Here, subjects, as Homi Bhabha has written, come "into being in the moment between these two locations, in the moment of translation that occupies the interstices."[64] Hence the intense relativity of color that preoccupied Josef Albers can be read as a model of subjectivity, as well as an exploration of a specific formal pictorial problem. For subjects, like color, are differently inflected and available for dissimilar perceptions in disparate contexts. And, to further the analogy, we can glean from Albers's insistence on the discipline of repetition that our sense of self, as much as our creative work, is subject to repetition and performance.

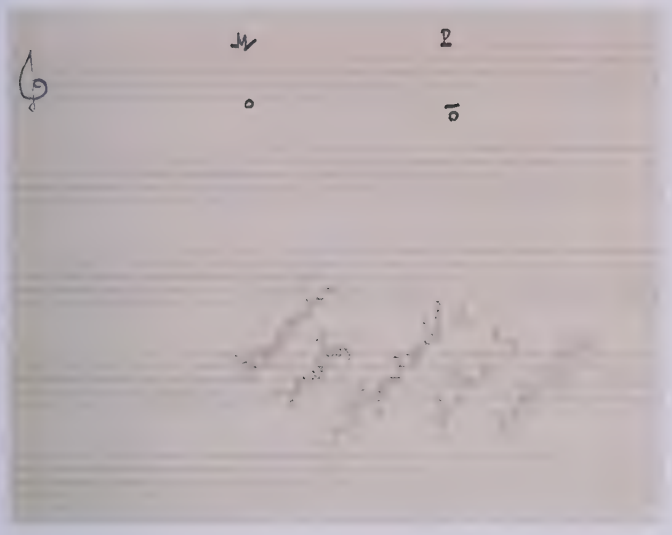
Perhaps this is one way to understand Cage's composition *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951). The score instructs twelve pairs of performers to play twelve radios according to time signatures, one performer controlling the volume and the other controlling the tone. The radio stations would be local, the performers individual, and the radios may or may not be the same model. The resulting performance in which everything is all mixed up—cacophony punctured by fleeting moments of coincidental harmony—is hilarious and infuriating, confusing and pleasurable. The repetition of the score necessarily produces infinite singular variations on the core, shared structure. This jibes with a small handwritten note of Cage's I came across in

59. *Black Mountain College Bulletin* 1, no. 3 (February 1943).
60. Stefan Wolpe, quoted in Brigid Cohen, "Diasporic Dialogues in Mid-Century New York: Stefan Wolpe, George Russell, Hannah Arendt and the Historiography of Displacement," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 6, no. 2 (2012): 159.
61. Jessica Schiff Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3.
62. Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 638–39.
63. Bruce Robbins, quoted in Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community*, 16.
64. Homi Bhabha, quoted in ibid., 17.




THE CORPORATION OF BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE
(a self-owned, non-stock North Carolina Corporation, without endowment; three Officers, Rector, Charles Olson; Secretary, Joseph Fiore; Treasurer, Wesley Huss
a Board of Fellows, the above and Stefan Wolpe, Anthony Landreau
principle of operation: "societas magistrorum et discipulorum" the corporation of masters and disciples
THE FEDERATED OPERATIONS OF SAID CORPORATION
a magazine: The Black Mt Review; editor, Robert Creeley also connected Origin (Boston), Ark (San Francisco)
writing
Black Mt
The College
P.C.
art
painting
drawing
lithography
shops
wood
print
pottery
weaving
a publishing house
(Black Mt Press; Divers Press; also connected Jonathan Wms., & Jargon Press)
theater
a theater: at Black Mt; Robert Duncan San Francisco; productions NY, Cambridge
institutes: mytho- archeo- bio- geo-
an academy
(connected Poetry Center, San Francisco; lectures & readings Boston; Philadelphia; "Weekend Academy", New York City)
Advisory Council
Dr Carl Jung, Zurich;
Dr Carl O. Sauer, Berkeley;
Dr Norbert Wiener, Cambridge;
Dr Wm Carlos Williams, N.J.;
Mr Franz Kline, New York City

Charles Olson, *Plan for the Operation of Black Mountain College after 1956* (verso and recto), c. 1954. Ink on paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches.



Detail of a page from one of John Cage's 1958 musical-notation books. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

one of his composition books at the Getty Research Institute. In it he had scrawled, in pencil, on the back of a page, "democratic society independent & related to each other."[65] The equal emphasis on independence and interconnectedness produces tension, but not only tension. Certainly, when Merce Cunningham decided that all the elements of a dance—music, scenography, choreography, and costume—could be conceived of as acting independently from one another, that is, when he ruptured the synthetic relations between dance, music, costumes, and lighting, he showed us that radical parity coupled with independence can produce moments of joy.

One of Black Mountain College's last "official" documents is Olson's diagram circa 1954, typewritten on onionskin paper, of how the college might be saved, how it might continue despite the fact that it had nearly run out of funds (so much that the dining hall was closed, there was no coal to heat the buildings, and the remaining faculty and students, who had retreated to small cabins up on the hill, were, by some accounts, painfully hungry). "The College" is typed at the center point of the diagram's concentric circles. Then, like a map, it branches out into quadrants that are marked not by direction but by types of institutions: a theater, an academy, a magazine, a publishing house, assigned with far-flung locations: Cambridge, Massachusetts; New York; Berkeley, California; Philadelphia; and San Francisco. Activities—painting, lithography, and writing—move away from the center to these outposts. North Carolina appears on the map in the center; underneath, it reads "mytho-, archeo-, bio-, geo-." The diagram speaks to a desire for preservation through atomization. It is a dream picture of a cosmopolitan college of satellite institutions held together by a centripetal force, a myth at its center: Black Mountain College.

It's easy to see the diagram as born of desperation. Olson took over the leadership from Albers, acting as defacto rector until his official appointment in 1954, and the ship was sinking on his watch. To his credit, he did not abandon it: after the college closed, he stayed on to finalize its financial affairs, as well as its psychic ones—namely, the dispersal of John Rice's library and the arrangement of long-term care for the gravesites of the beloved Jalowetz and the equally adored mathematics professor Max Dehn.[66] Truth be told, Olson's plan is not so far removed in spirit from that of the college's founders. According to M. C. Richards, "At one time Rice said he thought the college should disperse every ten years into smaller units. . . . This was to avoid too much stability. It was to be faithful to the chaos out of which creativity constellates."[67] The diagram shows how Olson was trying to save what he felt was most important about the place. In an earlier document, written in 1952, when the days were sunnier and warmer, he had penned the following: "Black Mountain College carefully recognizes that, at this point in man's necessities, it is not things in themselves but *what happens between things* where the life of them is to be sought."[68] This rhymes with Bhabha's earlier description of the cosmopolitan subject, whose identity comes not from a rooted place but rather from a movement *between* places, such that the relationships between places is what is of interest and value. In his minor manifesto about what Black Mountain had to offer the prospective student in 1952, Olson suggests that although there are "no ideas but in things"—a phrase of William Carlos Williams he was fond of quoting—things (institutions, education, poetry, art) were meaningful only through the energy that transpired between them. Thus, some years later, he could imagine, in a diagram largely made up of gaps between lines and shapes, an institution dispersed across time and place, an institution whose energies were not rooted in a specific location but whose fertile seeds were carried by individuals to many places. It's as if the diagram visualizes Gertrude Stein's question, "What good are roots if you can't take them with you?" Her quip must have rung in Olson's ears when he sent a postcard from Washington, DC, to Black Mountain student Fielding Dawson with the following bit of verse:

whatever you have to say, leave
the roots on, let them
dangle
And the dirt
    just to make clear
    where they came from[69]

9
FORM

Every form has meaning. To understand the meaning of form that is the conscious seeing of and feeling for form is the indispensible condition of culture.

—Katherine Frankforter, class notes from Josef Albers's design class, August 18, c. 1942–45[70]

Form is never more than an extension of content.

—Charles Olson, paraphrasing Robert Creeley[71]

In art, form is the shape or structure of an object. While many of the artists at Black Mountain differed in their approach to pedagogy and the ultimate meaning and/or uses of art and culture, and while they diverged in their views of community, politics, and institutional procedures, nearly all were committed, in profound ways, to the exploration of form. This tendency was firmly established when Josef Albers arrived and instituted the fundamental courses in color and design that he had been perfecting during

65. John Cage, inscription in a musical notation book, 1958, object reference 970077, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
66. See Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 438.
67. M. C. Richards, "Black Mountain College: A Personal View of Creativity," in *Opening Our Moral Eye: Essays, Talks and Poems Embracing Creativity and Community* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1996), 67.
68. "BMC Prospectus for Spring Semester, Feb. 11–June 7, 1952," reprinted in *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, 202.
69. Charles Olson, "These Days," in *The Archaeologist in Morning*, quoted in Fielding Dawson, *The Black Mountain Book, A New Edition* (New York: Croton, 1970), 76.
70. Katherine Frankforter, class notes from Black Mountain College, 1942–1945, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
71. Charles Olson, "Projective Verse" (1950), in Olson, *Human Universe and Other Essays*, ed. Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 51–61. Also available online at http://writing.upenn.edu/~taransky/Projective_Verse.pdf, accessed August 2014. "Projective Verse" first appeared in *Poetry* (1950).

opposite, top Kenneth Noland, *Untitled*, 1947. Oil on board, 16 x 24 inches.
opposite, bottom W. Pete Jennerjahn, *Study in Orange, Gray, and Ochre*, c. 1947.
Oil on Masonite, 20 x 16 inches.
above Josef Albers, *Black Frame*, 1934. Oil on Masonite, 15 ½ x 23 ⅞ inches.

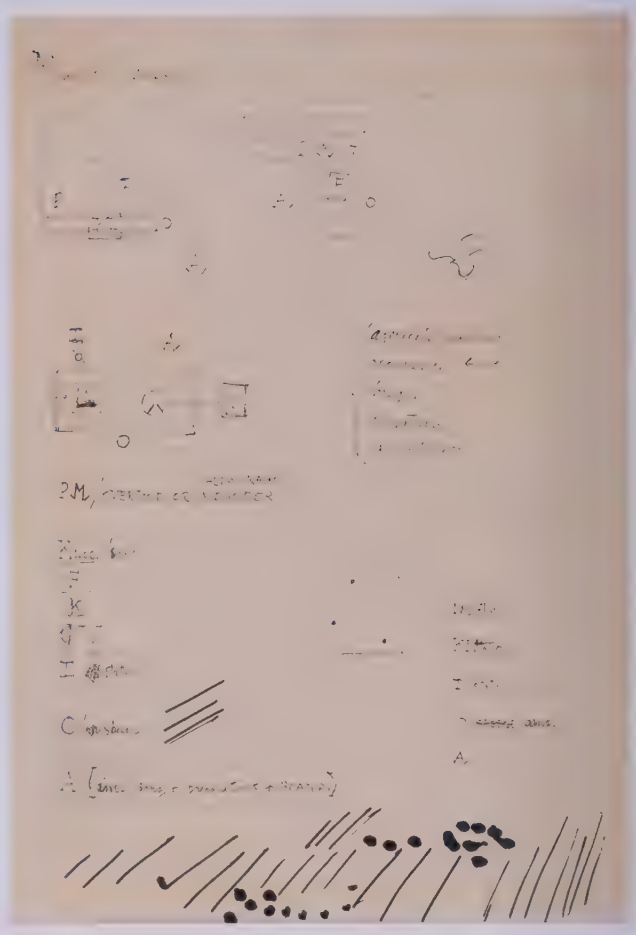
his tenure at the Bauhaus. Tailored to meet the needs of the many nonart students at the college, these courses became the backbone of arts teaching at Black Mountain.

Albers didn't just teach the fundamentals of form in his classes; he repeatedly explored them in his own work, too. His first painting at Black Mountain, *Black Frame* (1934), is a modest and awkward affair. A black picture frame levitates above floating, off-kilter, rectangular planes of verdant green and sky blue. The background of the image is a bifurcated plane of color: rust above and navy below. It's as if Albers found himself in the dissection lab of a biology class; for in *Black Frame*, he diligently pulls apart the constituent parts of a picture: frame, interior, foreground, background, and color. Albers continued this dismantling of the components of images in his prints, where he played with how lines could create three-dimensional space on two-dimensional planes. In his early paintings, he experimented with color to create foreground and background by testing the visual perception of color and shape.

Color preoccupied him for decades to come: he felt it was crucial to understand visual form, and he found color, out of all of art's attributes, to be the most variable, the most slippery. In 1963, long after his tenure at Black Mountain, he wrote: "Practical exercises demonstrate through color deception (illusion) the relativity and instability of color. And experience teaches that in visual perception there is a discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect."[72] If every form has meaning and the task of discovering that meaning is the very fabric of culture, then Albers had assigned himself the most difficult problem of all: to explore color is to investigate the variables that constitute life (light, context, individual perception, and memory). This kind of inquiry refuses the dogmatic and the all-knowing and prohibits the stifling of creativity that comes from confidence, competence, or habit. Or, as student Ati Gropius understood it in her class notes: "Since art is documentation of human mentality through visual form art is fundamentally concerned with the relationship of appearance to behavior, in other words, the emotional meaning of form."[73]

John Cage originally arrived at Black Mountain as Merce Cunningham's accompanist, but he soon made his presence felt as an ambitious thinker. Cage came to Black Mountain numerous times, including the legendary summer session of 1948 and also during the summers of 1952 and 1953. This period coincided with the time Cage was working through his new ideas about musical composition and his radical rethinking of the forms music could take. The first and most prominent intersection of Cage's new line of thought and the Black Mountain community came in 1948 when he arranged a series of evening concerts of the music of Satie. Given the investments of the musical community at Black Mountain in the Germanic tradition, Albers asked Cage to lecture on Satie's importance. Cage obliged with "Defense of Satie." It was a manifesto in sheep's clothing, offering "the first full articulation of his own personal view of composition."[74] If Albers's project was to isolate color then Cage's was to articulate an equally fundamental aspect of music: time. He put it contentiously: "There has been only one new idea since Beethoven. And that new idea can be perceived in the work of Anton Webern and Erik Satie. With Beethoven the parts of a composition were defined by means of harmony. With Satie and Webern they are defined by means of time length."[75]

Cage observed that sound and silence both depended equally on time, and he began to see silence and sound as similarly important to the compositional process, which led him to

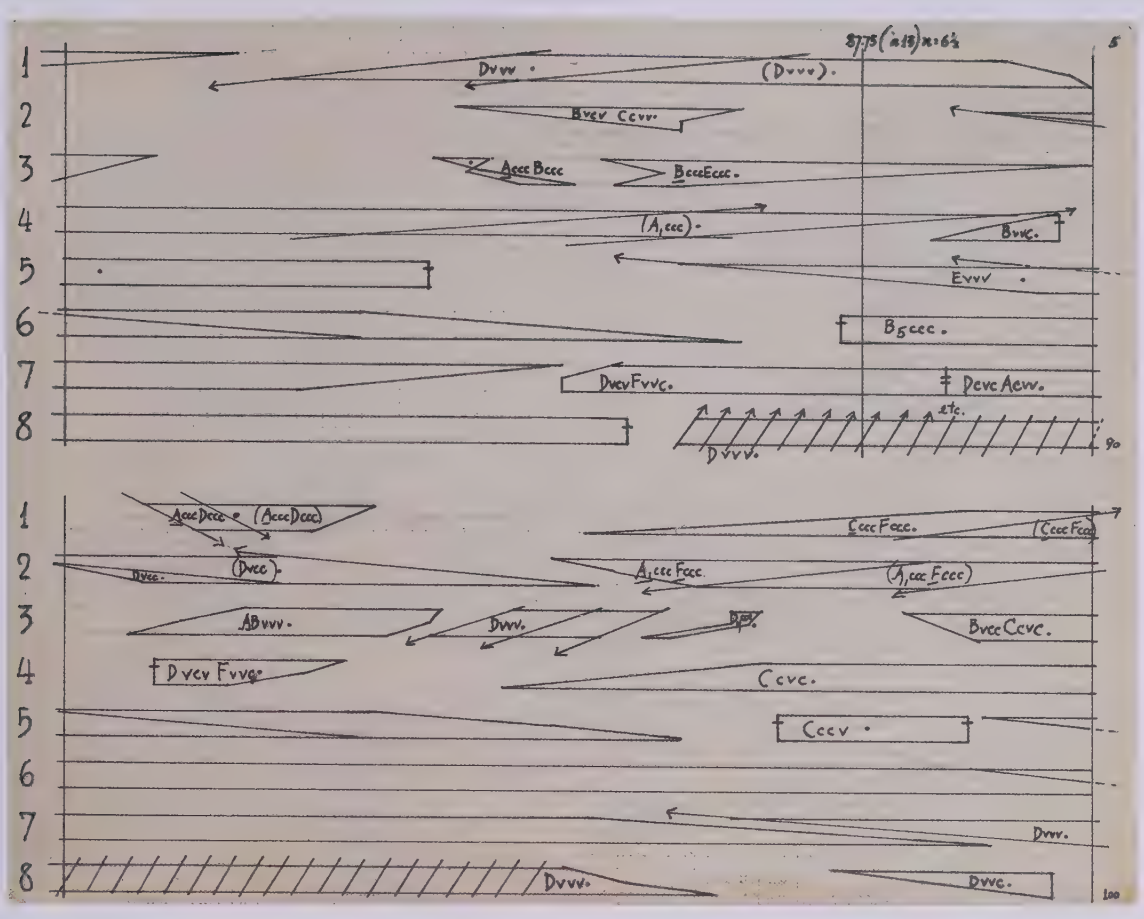


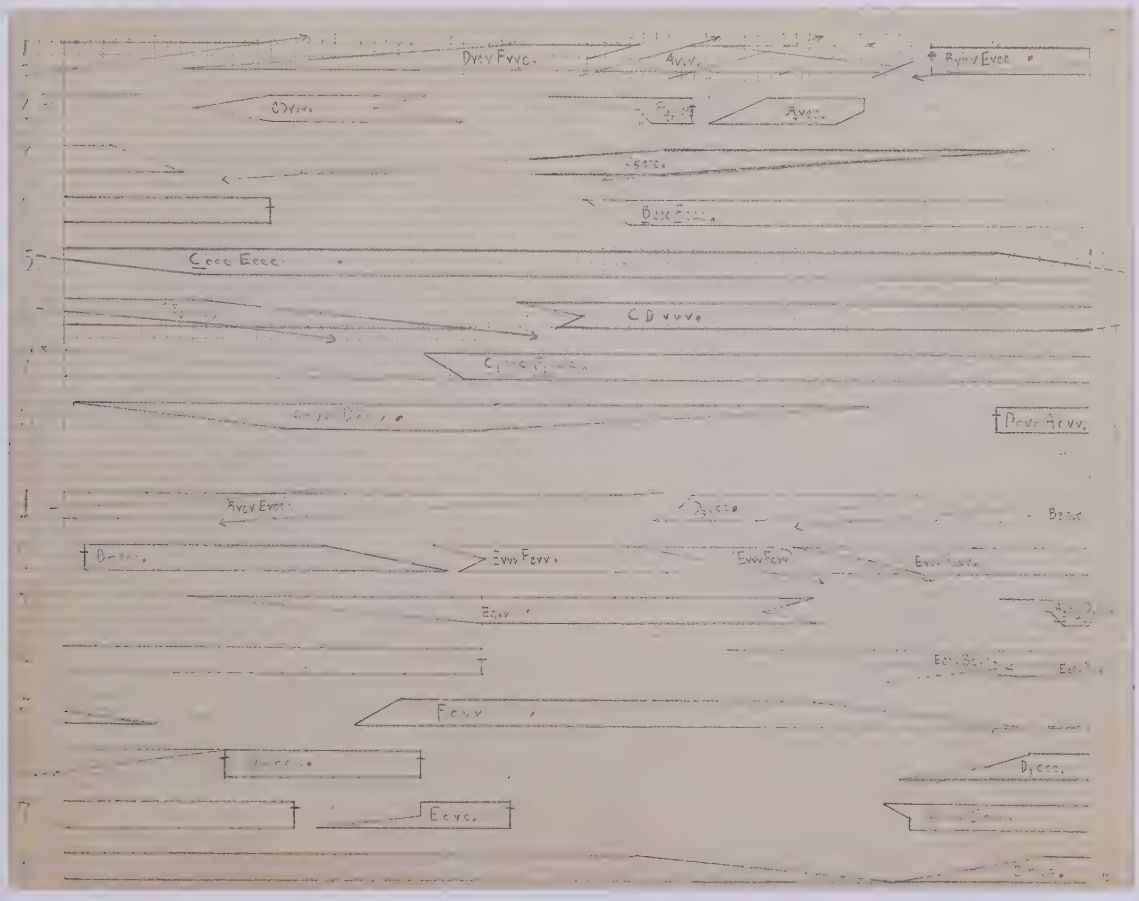
John Cage, *Music Walk (Notation Plan)*, c. 1958. Pen and ink on paper, 8 ¾ x 6 inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, Patrons' Permanent Fund, and Gift of Dorothy and Herbert Vogel, 1991.

conclude that "of the four characteristics of the material of music (pitch, loudness, timbre, and duration) duration, that is time length, is the most fundamental."[76] For Cage, the game was to eliminate the "decadence" of the authorial flourishes that emanate from music's other three characteristics in order to stem what he argued was Beethoven's "deadening of the art of music."[77] Legend has it that Paul Goodman, whose liberal attitudes with regard to sexual politics did not extend into musical taste, was so infuriated by Cage's attack on Beethoven that he stormed out of the room after the lecture.[78]

Cage wanted to replace harmony with time as music's primary modality, so that music could "imitate nature in the manner of her operations." The quote is from South Asian philosopher Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, and Cage repeated it often. Instead of trying to evoke the natural world through music's capacity for affect (e.g., swelling harmonies or the mimicry of natural sounds), Cage began to deploy randomness as a means to represent nature structurally in the formal logic of the composition. (For instance, the natural event of a flock of birds taking off, circling, and landing, is different each time. And this is precisely

72. Albers, *Interaction of Color*, 2.
73. Ati Gropius, class notes from August 1946, box 67, Black Mountain College Research Project Papers, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
74. James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 38.
75. John Cage, "Defense of Satie" (1948), in *John Cage: An Anthology*, 81.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Cage recounted this version of the story to Martin Duberman, but as Duberman explains in a note: "There's an unaccountable, major contradiction in Cage's version of this episode as he told it to me in our telephone interview of April 26, 1967. Paul Goodman, he said, not Bodky, had been the man outraged by the anti-Beethoven talk—so much so that 'from then on—even to the present day, [we are] not on speaking terms really. We do speak now but I rarely see him, and we don't search one another out . . . he was absolutely indignant.' But Goodman wasn't at Black Mountain in the summer of 1948, so it would seem that Cage had blended together two episodes from his memory." Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 515–16, n50.





both: John Cage, *Williams Mix*, 1952. Marker on paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches.

the point: randomness is the essential "manner" of nature.) When he borrowed Satie's "relatively banal sounds" derived from generating music based on a time signature and crossed them with randomness, he was attempting to mimic nature's "manner of operations." Cage's observation that non-Western music was not predicated on harmonic structures furthered his interest in the potential relationships between Eastern philosophy and nonharmonic music. *Williams Mix* (1952), made while he was in residence at Black Mountain, is an early and seminal example of Cage's theories turning into his compositional practice. Composed entirely by meticulously splicing and reassembling magnetic-tape recordings, *Williams Mix* runs the gamut from mechanical noises to recorded music, and the score, a nearly inscrutable drawing on graph paper in which gridded squares correspond to periods of time, does not remotely resemble a traditional score with notes on a staff. The work's title is honorific, signaling the financial support offered by Paul and Vera Williams, who were fellow travelers at the college. The summer Cage worked on the piece, he offered it as the subject of a class, but the students were too wise to show up, knowing that class participation would mean hours of painful cutting and splicing. The resulting work is an aural landscape that is nearly nondescript in aggregate. It is difficult to isolate the elements or to discern how it was constructed, but as a whole it constitutes a consummate "sound poem" comprising what any twentieth-century Western citizen might have heard on a daily basis: a blur of sound. *Williams Mix* led Cage toward his lifelong use of chance procedures as an engine for the composition of music that imitates nature's primary operation—random acts of duration structured equally by sound and silence.

For most of the 1950s, the poet Charles Olson was the unlikely leader at Black Mountain. During his time at the college, he wrote one of his most important aesthetic treatises, "Projective Verse." In it, he staked his claim for a poetry, and perhaps even prose, that resisted "closed verse, the verse which print bred."[79] Olson demanded instead that verse must "put into itself certain laws and possibilities of the breath, of the breathing of the man who writes as well as of his listenings."[80] Here we can hear shades of Cage, whose plea for silence as well as sound was integral to his thinking. So too for Olson; listening and breathing were as important to language as writing and reading. The primary task of new verse was to break away from the stranglehold of convention, to liberate language from rhyme and meter, and, ultimately, to free poetry to concentrate on its two most rudimentary formal elements: syllable and line.

The syllable, Olson argued, comes from listening, and the joyfulness of words stems from how they are heard and compounded by the ear: "the ear which has collected, which has listened, the ear, which is so close to the mind that it is the mind's, that it has the mind's speed."[81] Syllables are assembled, arranged, and laid out in line, and the line's logic must be that of the writer's breath. His (it was almost always "his" in Olson's world) breathing becomes the pace of the poem, and hence dictates its velocity and tempo, rather than any predetermined temporal arrangement. Here's how Olson puts it: "The line comes (I swear it) from the breath, from the breathing of the man who writes, at the moment that he writes, and thus is, it is here that, the daily work, the WORK, gets in, for only he, the man who writes, can declare, at every moment, the line its metric and its ending—where its breathing, shall come to, termination."[82] As different as Albers's paintings are in affect and tone from Olson's poems, it is tempting to analogize their interests and methods here. If Albers zeroed in on color as one of paintings' constitutive components and the one most available to individual perception, then Olson trained his attention on the syllable as the building block of poetry and the line as its most individuated element. Lest the individual and his breath become too sentimental an ideal, Olson strongly notes the role of mechanical mediation to the process: "It is the advantage of the typewriter that, due to its rigidity and its space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends."[83] Breath, speed, tempo, space: as much as the essay delves into the building blocks of poetry, it also perhaps betrays the exposure Olson had to music and dance at Black Mountain.[84]

Olson was well aware of his attempt to overhaul poetry, to reshape its foundation; in "Projective Verse," he paraphrases in all caps the assertion of his friend Robert Creeley that "FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT."[85] It is provocative to flip the order, for, recalling Albers, "all form has meaning." But the order seems beside the point, since, for both Albers and Olson, form and content are in a dialectical relationship suffused with intimacy: you cannot have one without the other. The same is true of Cage's understanding of sound and silence, of nature, "in the manner of her operations" and man-made sounds. For Olson, this intimacy is further conveyed through his understanding of the proximity of writer and reader, speaker and listener. Olson cannot imagine a poem that sits on a page alone, in a book silent. Rather, his address is always to another, and during the Black Mountain years that "other" was most often Creeley, to whom his *Mayan Letters* were written and to whom his magnum opus, *The Maximus Poems*, is dedicated, with the following epigraph: "All my life I've heard/one makes many."[86]

Albers, Cage, Olson: the three men could not have been more different from one another in temperament, training, pedagogical style, and personal politics, and yet they were each committed to the formal roots of their disciplines and mediums: color, time, breath. As much as they fell back on the building blocks of their mediums, they remained open to the present: Albers used mass-produced colored paper and paint directly from the tube, Cage made music with magnetic tape and the radio, and Olson relied on the typewriter. Though they each emphasized the operations of individual perception in their work, they also understood that perception is always mediated. In reckoning with

79. Olson, "Projective Verse."
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Robert Duncan, who taught at Black Mountain in 1956, was also deeply invested in the problem of form. He recalled the teaching methods there as follows: "We dealt first with vowel sounds and took quite a long time with that. Then consonant clusters, and then we did syllables. . . . Perhaps thinking of the work Albers had done earlier at Black Mountain, my idea was to work with the materials of poetry, when a technique applies, and everything else would be their own account." Duncan, quoted in Lisa Jarnot, *Robert Duncan: The Ambassador from Venus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 153. My thanks to Steve Evans for bringing this passage to my attention.
85. Ibid.
86. Charles Olson, while living in the Yucatán, wrote *The Mayan Letters* from December 1950 to July 1951 to Robert Creeley. Creeley edited and assembled the letters and published them in 1953. Charles Olson, *Mayan Letters*, ed. Robert Creeley (Palma, Majorca: Divers Press, 1953); Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems*, ed. George F. Butterick (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
87. "BMC Prospectus for Spring Semester, Feb. 11–June 7, 1952," reprinted in *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, 202.
88. One of the many charges against postmodernism is that it lost sight of the problems of form and replaced them with the problems of representation. What emerges from a rethinking of Black Mountain is the strong line of continuation and filiation that postmodernism has with modernism; this suggests that there is perhaps something to be gained through reengaging with the aesthetic and political possibilities of form.
89. Olson, "Untitled," *The Maximus Poems*, 343.
90. Kobena Mercer, "Romare Bearden, 1964 Collage as *Kunstwollen*," in *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 126.

Josef Albers, *Growing*, 1940. Oil on Masonite, 24 x 26 ¾ inches.

the effects of quotidian technologies and their impact on the individual, they are each of their time: as they dug for the root, they nevertheless remained grounded in the present, which saved their art from taking on the airlessness of pure formalism.

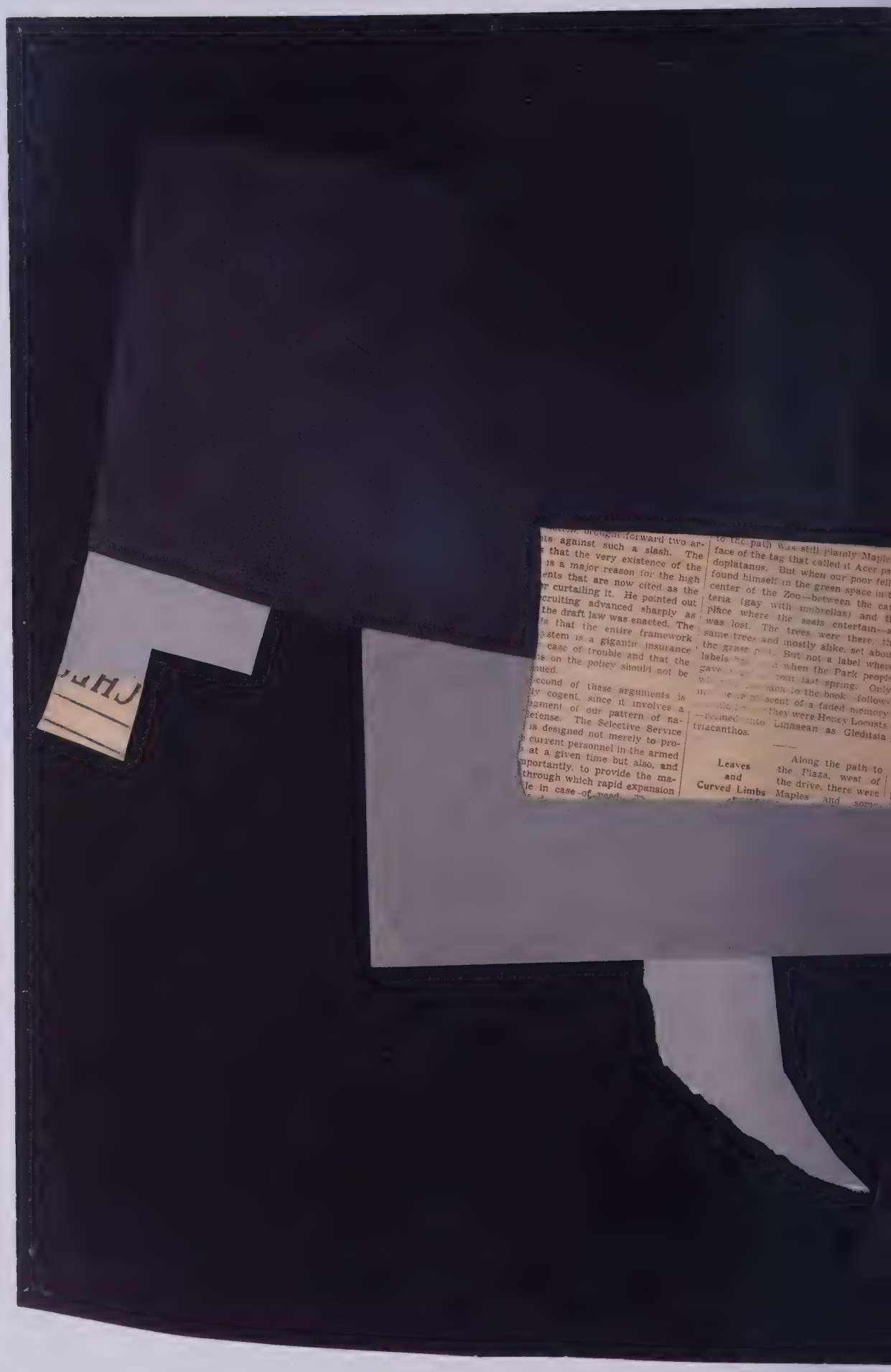
They also explored the in-between—Albers, in the relativity of color's perception; Cage, in the parity of sound and silence; and Olson, in the movements connecting writer and listener. Indeed, both Albers and Cage shared Olson's sense that "it is not the things in themselves but what happens between things where the life of them is to be sought."[87] It is precisely the space between their formal rigor and their openness to perception and its contingencies that places their practices in the nascent shift from modernism to postmodernism, and turned Black Mountain College into the unlikely wellspring of avant-garde culture.[88] Olson would suggest in a poem written after his time at Black Mountain that he, like many of the artists of the college, saw both the whole and the fragments:

> I looked up and saw
> its form
> through everything
> —it is sewn
> in all parts, under
> and over.[89]

10
COLLAGE

Etymologically the word *collage* means "to glue"; colloquially it means to cut and paste. Either way, collage—the assembly of various parts into newly composed wholes—is one of the most dominant aesthetic procedures of twentieth-century art. It began when Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque incorporated everyday things like scraps of wallpaper, newspaper clippings, or a piece of rope into a picture, and it extended into Dada and Surrealism, where it came to represent the violence of modernity and the fissured nature of the human psyche. It can be seen in individual, eccentric applications, such as in the oeuvres of Joseph Cornell, Edward Kienholz, and May Wilson. It fueled the information age, through the airwaves of radio and television, and it is now structural for the digital age, as evidenced by everything from hip-hop sampling to postmodern pastiche. Collage as an aesthetic, a practice, and a philosophy dominated twentieth-century art and life.

Art historian Kobena Mercer has suggested that collage may be the *Kunstwollen*—the German word for an aesthetic form that is nearly inseparable from the social dynamics of its age—most associated with cosmopolitanism, observing that it is "compelling to think of the formal dynamics of collage as especially relevant to the hyphenated character of diaspora identities historically shaped by the unequal interaction of African and European elements."[90] Mercer elaborates: "the formal principle of collage and montage lies in the purposive selection of signifying elements, found or taken from disparate sources, that are combined in unexpected juxtapositions to create something new



58 Sewell Sillman, *Values in Neutrals*, n.d. Collage on paper, 15 x 20 ½ inches

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Double Taxation

Here are the people who must be relied upon to supply the investment capital that is so badly needed. Congressman Byrnes' bill, H. R. 3272, by reducing the tax discrimination against equity finance, will lend material encouragement to the investment of this potential reservoir of American capital in business enterprise. Therefore, by giving some slight relief, by alleviating the unfair double taxation and by encouraging investment by the low and middle income groups in the future of American business, I think this is the most meritorious piece of proposed tax legislation that has been put forward.

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that exists as an independent form in its own right."[91] In Mercer's assessment, collage works through a radical twentieth-century subject position as much as it breaks through the loggerhead of inherited forms (painting, photography, sculpture, etc.) to forge a distinctly new form.

Collage was originally smuggled into Black Mountain by Josef Albers's color-theory course. Albers preferred using mass-produced colored paper—because its color and texture was uniform—over paint, which he found "difficult, time-consuming, and tiring" to mix.[92] He also extolled the virtues of making do with what was readily at hand, as evidenced in the extraordinary leaf studies that were conducted during the fall, when the trees were ablaze with color. The Depression-era culture of frugality and "making do"—extended by wartime rationing—likely caused Albers to encourage his students to use "waste strips found at printers and bookbinders; collections of samples of packing papers, of wrapping and bag papers, of cover and decoration papers. . . . Also, instead of full sheets of paper, just cutouts from magazines, from advertisements and illustrations, from posters, wallpapers, paint samples, and from catalogues with color reproductions of various materials."[93] Hence, cutting, pasting, gathering, disassembly, and reassembly—essentially the operations of collage—were all by-products of the primary color-theory lesson. These activities happened as well in the *matière* studies, as the students made assemblages composed of a variety of materials—seeds, corrugated cardboard, and eggshells—to exploit myriad visual and tactile properties.

Thus collage, ushered in under the rubric of color and materials, took hold at Black Mountain and in some ways can be seen as paradigmatic of the work that was produced there. It wasn't only Albers doing the cutting and pasting. During the summer of 1952, John Cage was working on *Williams Mix*. As his first composition made exclusively from meticulously cut and spliced magnetic tape, the work was rooted in collage. Charles Olson's landmark "Projective Verse" was an assemblage of fragments from his epistolary friendship with poet Robert Creeley. Collage was everywhere at Black Mountain—so much woven into the fabric of making there that it went unremarked upon. Even the prominent Abstract Expressionists who taught at Black Mountain engaged with the technique: Robert Motherwell was a highly accomplished collagist, working in a strong Cubist vein; Franz Kline used torn pages of the phone book as a ground for his drawings; and Willem de Kooning collaged elements into his painting *Asheville*, a work made at Black Mountain during the summer of 1948.

Ironically, the Black Mountain student most associated with collage—Rauschenberg—did not make many collages during his time there.[94] But he was honing his skills as he explored textures and tactility: he made ravishing blueprints of verdant plant matter (a series started in collaboration with his former partner and fellow student Susan Weil) and heavily painted blackish-brown wet canvases outside, embedding them with North Carolina dirt and pebbles. Each of these bodies of work signals an interest in wholeness—that is, in the gestalt of the picture plane, as promised in Abstract Expressionism. The one-to-one indexicality of these works heightens the unified nature of the compositions. He was learning how to make a whole before he proceeded to privilege the parts.

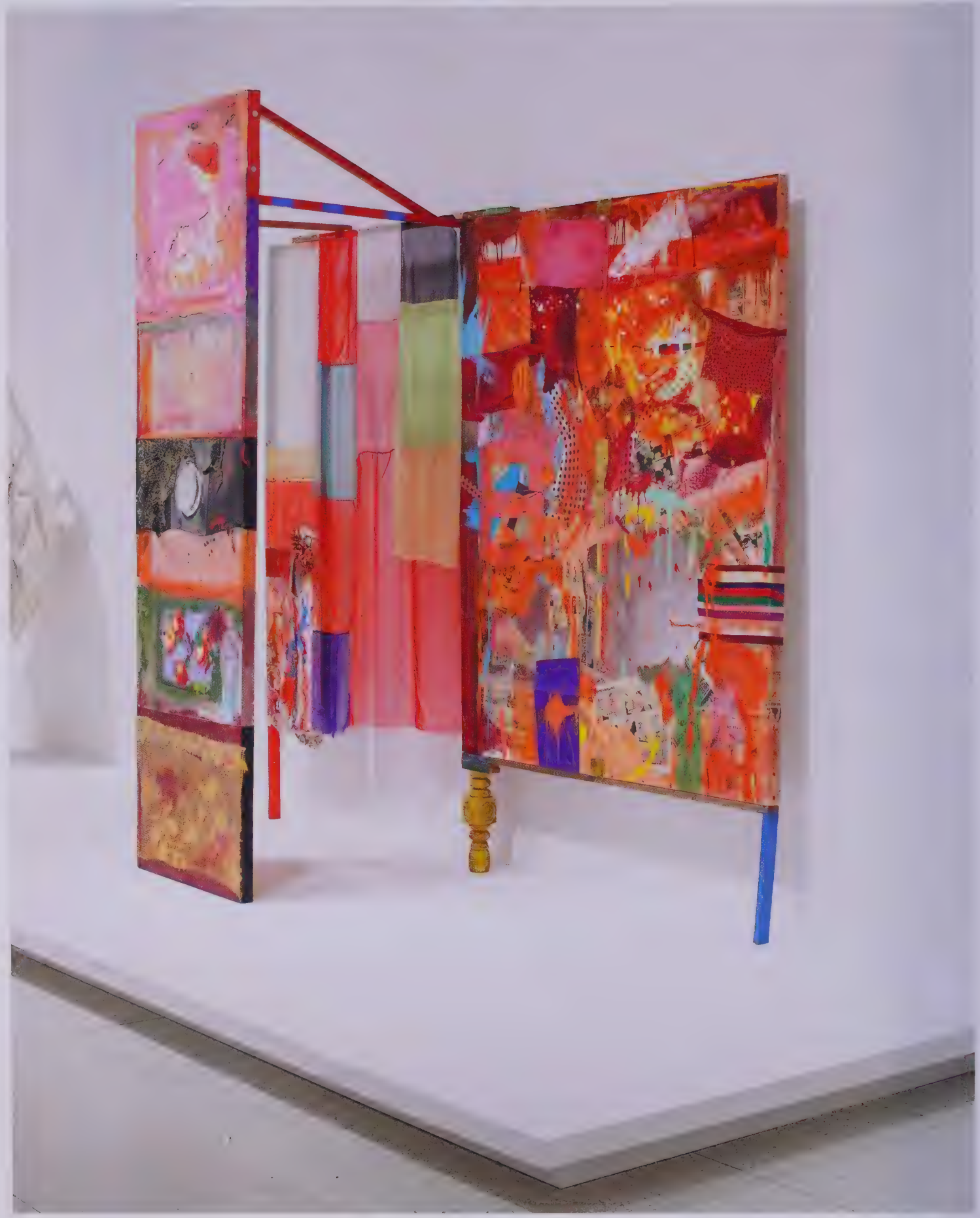
A definitive moment of self-conscious collage at Black Mountain came in the form of performance, namely Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1*. In the summer of 1952, the composer assigned each of his performers—David Tudor, Merce Cunningham, M. C. Richards, Rauschenberg, and Olson (maybe—memories are particularly fuzzy when it comes to *Theater Piece No. 1*)—time signatures, during which period they could do what they liked. The principle of collage was thus transported into performance.[95] Some accounts suggest that the young Rauschenberg—precocious, joyful, and rebellious—may have played Édith Piaf records, and others recall that one of his White Paintings was suspended from the ceiling. After that summer, Rauschenberg moved to New York and began to assimilate the various teachings of Black Mountain, and perhaps no lessons were more important than those he learned from dance and performance.

Rauschenberg first came to Black Mountain College in 1948 to study for the academic year with Albers, and he returned in the summers of 1951 and 1952. During this period, dance became an important part of the curriculum. Inspired by Cage and Cunningham's initial visit to the college in the spring of 1948, the college hosted choreographers Katherine Litz and Elizabeth Jennerjahn. Cage and Cunningham returned to the college several times, overlapping with Rauschenberg in the summer of 1952, when Rauschenberg took Cunningham's classes, a fact beautifully documented by photography instructor Hazel Larsen Archer. In the summer of 1953, Cunningham founded the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the college.[96] Soon after forming the company, Cunningham asked Rauschenberg if he would make a set decoration for a new dance, *Minutiae*. More than any other single work, Rauschenberg's freestanding set decoration, which shares its title with Cunningham's dance, weaves the threads of personal relationships and artistic inspirations that emerged from Black Mountain's interdisciplinary nurturing of dance and the visual arts. Cunningham described it as a "wonderful object! Colors, comic strips all over it. You could pass through it or under it or round it. He made it out of stuff he'd picked up off the street. I loved it because it was impossible to know what it was."[97] Rauschenberg would only later invent the neologism to articulate the third term he created between painting and sculpture: *Combines*.

Composed of paint, newspaper, found objects, and fabric on an open wood structure somewhat evocative of a Japanese screen, *Minutiae*, with its dramatic palette and textural materials, stems directly from Albers's *matière* studies. Moreover, the panels of color-blocked fabric evoke Albers's color studies, and its physical structure recalls the woven Room Dividers that Anni Albers had exhibited at her retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art a few years earlier, in 1949. Cage's use of chance is recalled in *Minutiae*'s seemingly random arrangement of collage elements, as well as in its free, or open, form, which encourages physical interaction. Finally, *Minutiae*, which initiated the artist's ten-year collaboration with the dance company and propelled Rauschenberg's own emerging sculpture practice, is formally self-sufficient, reflecting Cunningham's radical belief in the autonomy of the elements of a dance event—dance, music, and scenography. Considered "one of the most significant of the early combines,"[98] it was enhanced

91. Ibid.
92. Albers, *Interaction of Color*, 6.
93. Ibid.
94. Better known for their experimentation with collage at the college were students Ray Johnson and John Chamberlain. See Ruth Erickson's entry on Ray Johnson's *Untitled* (c. 1951) in this volume, 182.
95. For an in-depth account of *Theater Piece No. 1*, see Ruth Erickson's "Chance Encounters: *Theater Piece No. 1* and Its Prehistory," in this volume, 298–301.
96. See Katherine Markoski's "The Formation of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company," in this volume, 360–63.
97. Merce Cunningham and Jacqueline Lesschaeve, *The Dancer and the Dance: Merce Cunningham in Conversation with Jacqueline Lesschaeve* (1985; repr., New York: Marion Boyars, 1991), 55.
98. Paul Schimmel, "Autobiography and Self-Portraiture," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Combines* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005), 218. Schimmel argues that "it is conceivable that the challenge of creating a set piece for the stage was just the impetus that Rauschenberg needed to move from the two-dimensional world of painting into the three-dimensional world of sculpture and the four-dimensional world of performance." Ibid.

Robert Motherwell, *The Displaced Table*, 1943. Tempera, wood veneer, paper, ink, graphite, and colored pencil on canvas, 43 ¼ x 32 ⅛ x 2 inches.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Minutiae*, 1954/1976. Oil, paper, fabric, newsprint, wood, metal, plastic, mirror, and string on wood structure, 84 ½ x 81 x 30 ½ inches.

John Reiss, *Color Control*, n.d. Collage and gouache on paper, 14 x 22 inches.

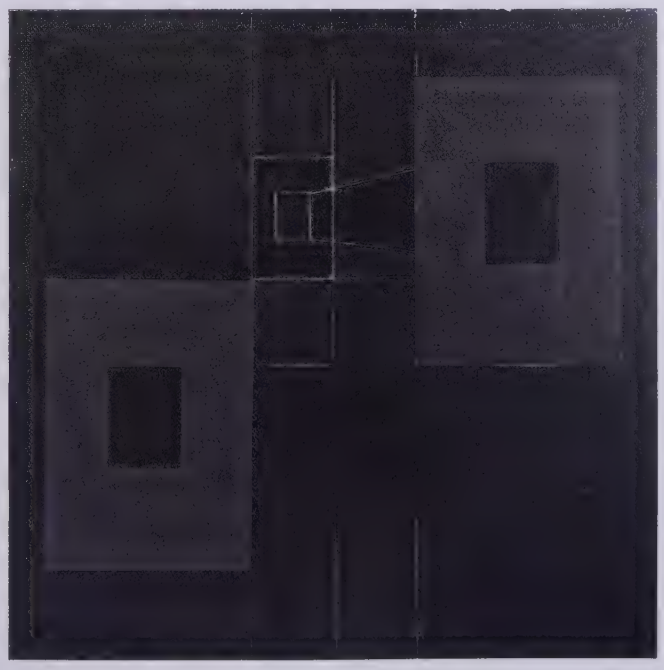
by the dancers' costumes, made from fabrics of the colors of the sculpture, leading to the suggestion that "as [the dancers] moved around the construction their bodies blended into what could be described as a living collage."[99]

From our vantage point, in 2015, Rauschenberg is practically considered an old master. So how can we recall the radicality, the utter disruption, that collage and, in turn, the newly invented Combine brought to painting and sculpture—not to mention the assault it provoked on the ontological definition of art as such? Especially when the language and practice of collage now affects nearly every part of culture? How can we ensure that the "PAST IS PRESENT AT THE MOMENT OF WRITING," as Olson contended in his teaching? Or, his even more difficult historical imperative, "if the subject is worth anything it should change the object."[100]

One way is to remember Merce Cunningham's distinct pleasure at not knowing what the object was. Another might be to return to the words of one of Rauschenberg's earliest, most trenchant critics, the art historian Leo Steinberg. Steinberg's essay "Other Criteria," first published in 1968, over a decade after the closure of Black Mountain College, is legendary; for in it the critic admits to his confusion in the face of the new. Rather than immediately dismissing Rauschenberg's work, however, he found himself looking very, very closely at it. He marveled at how his picture planes were surfaces "to which anything reachable-thinkable would adhere,"[101] and how his canvases or Combines were "no longer the analogue of a visual experience of nature but of operational processes."[102] For Steinberg, they exemplified the flatbed picture plane of work made on a horizontal surface like a desk, worktable, or printing press. It was a "matrix of information" that dealt with a "different order of experience," one distinct from that of the unified picture planes of Abstract Expressionism, which Steinberg saw as the last gasps of landscape painting.[103] Rauschenberg's works were constructed on the basis of a horizontal mode of organization that was "called upon to maintain a symbolic continuum of litter, workbench, and data-ingesting mind."[104] They were a "shake up which contaminates all purified categories," leaving in its wake something Steinberg called, for the first time in art history, "post-Modernist."[105] Postmodernism, as put into motion by Rauschenberg in 1954, stemmed directly from the relational formalism of Josef Albers, Cage, and Olson, as well as from the rigor of Anni Albers's approach to materiality and from the intimacy of the camera's lens via Hazel Larsen Archer.[106]

Minutiae is a painting and a sculpture, a sculpture and a prop, a screen and a divider. It is simultaneously a summation of all that Rauschenberg learned at Black Mountain and a launching pad for the postmodern era. But mostly it was a gift—for Cunningham—that contained an inside joke for the dancers: behind the exterior panel, where they sometimes paused, Rauschenberg placed strips from Otto Soglow's popular comic *The Little King* at eye level, which wordlessly depicted "his majesty attending an exhibition of modern sculpture," good for a moment or two of humor while the dancers caught their breath.[107]

Nicholas Cernovich, *Black Textures*, n.d. Collage, 8 ½ x 9 inches.



99. Charles Stuckey, "Rauschenberg's Combine Mode," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Combines*, 206–7.
100. Charles Olson, quoted in Dawson, *The Black Mountain Book, A New Edition*, 216. (Emphasis in original).
101. Steinberg, "Other Criteria," 88.
102. Ibid., 84.
103. Ibid., 85.
104. Ibid., 89.
105. Ibid., 91.
106. For more on Larsen Archer's work see Alice Sebrell, "There Is Another Way: Hazel Larsen Archer, Photographer, Educator," in this volume, 186–88.
107. Stuckey, "Rauschenberg's Combine Mode," 199.

11
HAPTIC

There is no such thing as a Black Mountain aesthetic, no dominant trend that unifies the artistic production of this small community. The work is too heterogeneous for that, and its practitioners were too idiosyncratic and individualistic to produce anything as old-fashioned as a style or, more aptly, a school.[108] This state of affairs is a frustrating one for art historians, whose disciplinary task is to assemble and order, so better to explain how and why art objects come into being, how they operate, and what they mean. In the game of narrating the art of the mid–twentieth century one idea garnered a lot of traction: that of critic Clement Greenberg, who fortuitously visited Black Mountain in the summer of 1950, with his then lover, the painter Helen Frankenthaler. Two years earlier, he had written the still-important article "The Crisis of the Easel Picture," in which he summed up the effect of the emergent ethos of Abstract Expressionism: "Just as Schoenberg makes every element, every voice and note in the composition of equal importance—different but equivalent—so these painters render every element, every part of the canvas equivalent; and they likewise weave the work of art into a tight mesh whose principle of formal unity is contained and recapitulated in each thread, so that we find the essence of the whole work in any one of its parts."[109] Even though Greenberg is specifically referring to the eruption of Abstract Expressionist painting in New York, his description applies equally well to the kind of thinking that pervaded the experiments at Black Mountain. Indeed, later in the essay, when he writes, "it corresponds perhaps to the feeling that all hierarchical distinctions have been exhausted, that no area or order of experience is either intrinsically or relatively superior to any other,"[110] he sounds more like John Cage or Josef Albers than the grandfather of painterly formalism. But Greenberg was unable to sustain this openness and, in reviewing Willem de Kooning's first one-person show in New York for the *Nation* that same year, he wrote: "de Kooning's insistence on a smooth, thin surface is concomitant of his desire for purity, *for an art that makes demands only on the optical imagination*."[111]

Perhaps, in the end, Greenberg's argument held so much sway because art that relies heavily on the optical can be better reproduced in photographic images. But the majority of art at Black Mountain might be called "extraoptical." And if any description can encompass the whole of the Black Mountain aesthetic, it might be the haptic, as opposed to the purely optical. While the dictionary may define *haptic* as "relating to the sense of touch, in particular relating to the perception and manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and proprioception," the word, when used in reference to works of art, denotes those works that engage visuality through an appeal to tactility. Haptic objects intertwine visuality and tactility so thoroughly that they are inextricable from each other.

Such a recasting, away from the prioritization of visuality, allows us to think about the production of woodworking, architecture, collage, and pottery nonhierarchically. Thinking through the matrix of the haptic might offer a way around now-hackneyed classifications of art and craft to permit a full engagement with the stated aims of Black Mountain, which was to enable "learning through doing." There is a tacit assumption that "learning through doing" means using one's hands and one's brain, a disruption of the Cartesian model of subjectivity that privileges the mind over the body. At Black Mountain, there was a desire to teach students to become more aware of the world around by instilling in them respect for the acts of both perception and process, all in the service of honing their critical skills. Even though Albers's stated aim was "to open eyes," it's hard to imagine that the teacher of the *matière* studies was interested solely in the "optical imagination"; and certainly Anni Albers's commitments to exploring materials and producing both functional and nonfunctional weavings mitigate Greenberg's claim that the fundamental role or purpose of art was in service to visuality alone.

previous Faith Murray Britton, *Matière Study*, 1941. Paper, paint, fabric, corrugated paper, magazine images, wheat seeds, and other materials, 15 x 20 inches.
above Trude Guermonprez, *Leaf Study VI*, 1948. Natural linen and jute, 20 x 8 inches.

The social fact of the Great Depression augmented Josef and Anni Albers's commitments to the go-between of art and craft and to materials. In a culture of scarcity, Black Mountain students were encouraged to use the materials at hand in their work: this meant leaves were incorporated into collages and bark into *matière* studies, and students gathered stones from adjacent fields and forests to construct the buildings they designed. This catholic approach to materials resulted in scores of deeply tactile works, a quality extended through works across disciplines with no apparent coordination. Photographs of a pot by Karen Karnes or Marguerite Wildenhain (see, respectively, pages 271 and 113) are not merely flattened images of a three-dimensional object; we perceive the tactility of these objects—their sensuous curves (Karnes) and their regimented sculptural bas-relief (Wildenhain). On the one hand, it seems clear that pottery and weaving engenders less optically inflected material objects; on the other hand, it seems just as clear that photography produces some of the most flat and optical artworks. But, in a beautiful coincidence, photography as practiced at Black Mountain also consistently explored tactility. This was as true of Josef Breitenbach's 1940s explorations

108. Even the Black Mountain School of Poetry, a moniker hatched by poetry editor Donald Allen, does not coalesce in a particularly cohesive manner, as it includes poets as disparate as Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley, and Allen Ginsberg.
109. Clement Greenberg, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture" (1948), in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 224.
110. Ibid.
111. Clement Greenberg, "Review of an Exhibition of Willem de Kooning," in *Clement Greenberg*, 229 (emphasis added).

Josef Breitenbach, *The Mechanic, New York*, c. 1946–49. Gelatin silver print, 13 7/8 x 11 inches.

opposite: Josef Breitenbach, *Abstraction (Thin Ice in the Woods)*, 1946.
Gelatin silver print, 13 ¾ x 10 ⅞ inches.
above: Aaron Siskind, *North Carolina 9*, 1951. Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 inches.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (from Portfolio I, 1952)*, 1952. Gelatin silver print mounted on board, 5 ⅝ x 3 ¼ inches

of colored printing and photograms, which led to highly haptic abstract and representational images, as it was of Arthur Siegel, Harry Callahan, and Aaron Siskind's strategies, which all accentuated the texture of whatever they were photographing. Similarly Hazel Larsen Archer's extraordinary images of Quiet House (see page 189) focus on the textures of the building's materials and heighten them with subtle framings of light and shadow. Student photos taken in Larsen Archer's class—for example, Jacqueline Gourevitch's pictures of woven chair seats (page 199) and Robert Rauschenberg's double exposure of filigreed foliage and his own image—also concentrate on the texture of their subjects.

And it wasn't only visual artists who were working within the visual-tactile divide. Bauhaus theater teacher and designer Xanti Schawinsky called his theater productions "Spectodramas," describing them thus: "'Spectodrama' comprises the fields of optics, form and color, acoustics, sound, language, music, time, space . . . architecture, technology . . . and illusion."[112] W. Pete and Elizabeth Jennerjahn also picked up on this interest in multisensorial experience in their Light Sound Movement workshop, which might be seen as an early iteration of Cage's experiments with fully integrated yet wholly autonomous forms of performance in *Theater Piece No. 1*.[113] While it is unusual to think of the haptic within the realm of music, it is hard not to consider the haptic qualities of Cage's prepared piano; for Cage deployed the tactility of his instrument to render it "extra-aural," showing that the haptic as a strategy was available to musicians as well. Indeed Cage's extension of the haptic into the realm of music shows us how the haptic works to reorganize the senses and expand the body's capacity for proprioception—the unconscious mechanism for perceiving one's body in relation to movement and position.

What emerges here is neither a master narrative of the triumph of the haptic over the optic nor a consolidation of a house style. Rather, the concern with the haptic, shared across mediums, registers that one effect of interdisciplinary practice might be an unhooking of a one-to-one equation between sense and medium (looking and painting, hearing and music, for example): hence Anni Albers makes pictorial weavings, Cage prepares a piano, Josef Albers engages in acts of optical illusion attentive to material properties, and Aaron Siskind makes photographic images textural. All these works of art test the viewer's perception, and many of them move into the realm of proprioception. Olson even wrote a poem about it after leaving Black Mountain, following through on some ideas embedded in his earlier "Projective Verse":

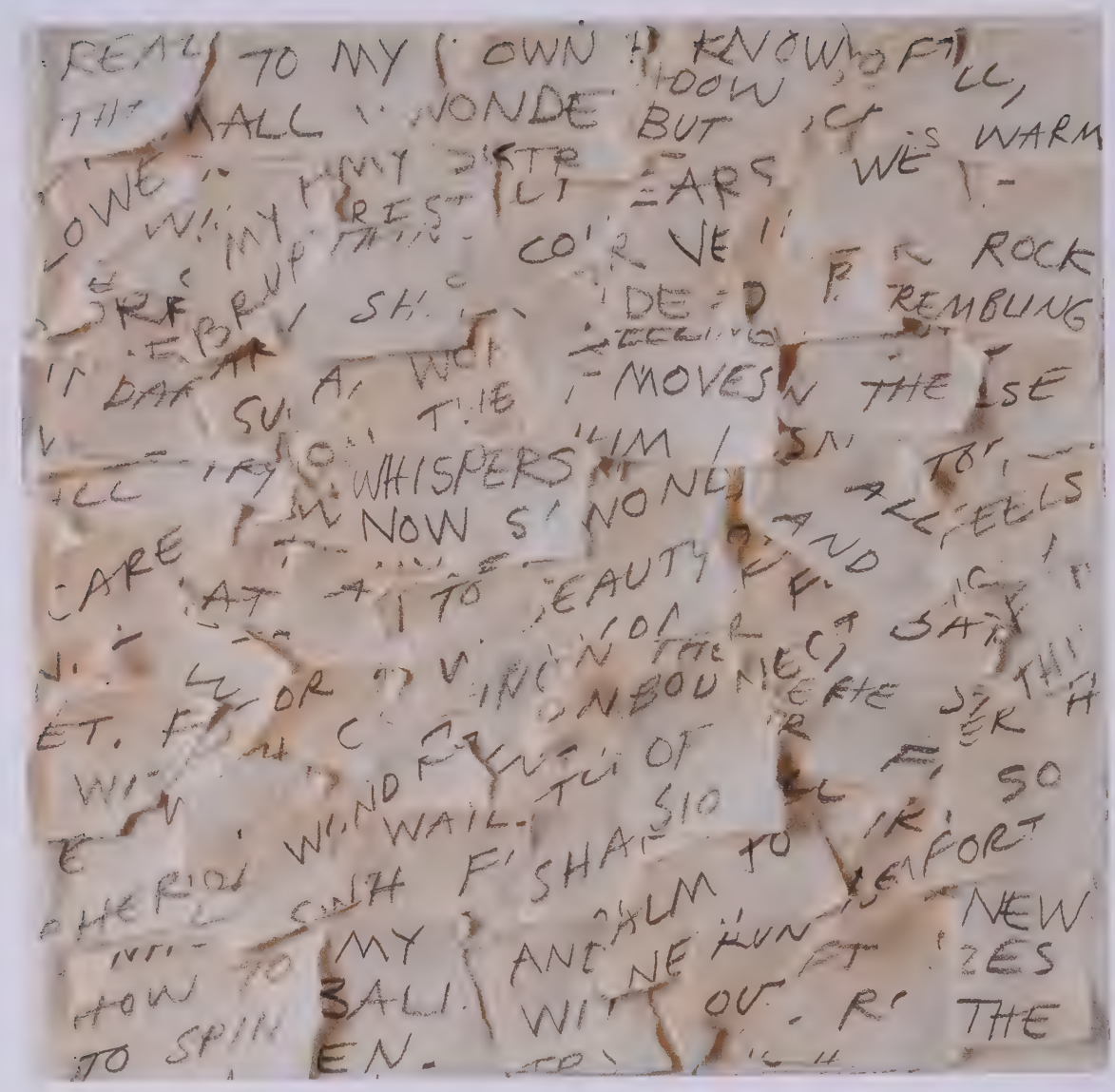
> To which
> PROPRIOCEPTION: the data of depth sensibility/the
> "body" of us as
> object which spontaneously or of its own order
> produces experience of, "depth" Viz
> SENSIBILITY WITHIN THE ORGANISM
> BY MOVEMENT OF ITS OWN TISSUES.[114]

When the senses become unhooked from a medium, the mind and the body find new ways of communicating sensory information. This detachment is not easily reproduced in slides and hence is not easily transmitted in an art-history classroom. Such maneuvers were deployed again and again at Black Mountain, and perhaps explain Merce Cunningham's great innovation: the disconnection of the constituent parts of a dance (music, choreography, lighting, scenography), allowing them to function independently of one another in a way that literally pulls the viewer's senses out of alignment with one another and reorganizes them.

The effects, or potential effects, of this new sensory capacity are subtle and verges on the synesthetic. M. C. Richards, who arrived at Black Mountain as a faculty member in literature and left as a student of pottery, wrote in her deeply influential book *Centering*: "Sometimes the skin seems to be the best listener, as it prickles and thrills, say to a sound or a silence; or the fantasy, the imagination: how it bursts into inner pictures as it listens."[115] She also recounts the words and actions of her first pottery instructor at Black Mountain, Robert Turner, who established the pot shop: "He was centering the clay, and then he was opening it and pulling up the walls of the cylinder. He was not looking at the clay. He had his ear to it. He was listening. 'It is breathing,' he said; and then he filled it with air."[116]

The pursuit of the haptic, then, opens up the possibility for both the reanimation and the (re?)embodiment of the senses. The engagement of all senses appears to lead to a kind of reciprocity as well—a concern as much with listening *and* speaking, or with touching *and* breathing, seeing *and* touching. This maneuver debunks the Cartesian version of the aesthetic self that holds the visual as supreme over the other senses, just as the mind presides over the body. The early days of Black Mountain were marked by the master optical illusionist Josef Albers's core instruction, which according to the class notes of student Katherine Frankforter were designed to promote "permanent criticism and permanent doubt."[117] His aspiration to "open eyes" was not intended to privilege the visual as such but rather to situate the visual as a part of a larger whole. Anni Albers suggested that the haptic might be a way in which to stay close to the materials at hand: "to form materials presupposes responsiveness towards the material, a flexibility of reaction, and this flexibility is one of the factors we will need for times to come."[118] With the hope, during the midst of world war, that the world could be rebuilt, Anni Albers intimated that working with materials, making art using your hands *and* your eyes, ultimately generates a kind of nimbleness—which I read as consummately physical, psychic, and intellectual—that is constitutive of the capacity to make empathetic and hence ethical choices. The legacy of the Alberses at Black Mountain—and their concerns with form that led to the haptic—endured and can be read, as late as 1952, in a college bulletin that claims, "Our central and consistent effort is to teach method, not content; to emphasize process, to invite the student to the realization that the way of handling facts and himself amid the facts is more important than the facts themselves."[119] It appears that the "handling of the facts," consciously or unconsciously, at Black Mountain was a task of the total human sensorium, an assignment that gave rise to a privileging of the haptic over the optic, of fluidity over stasis, of curiosity over assuredness, sentiments summed up by student John Chamberlain when he said that Black Mountain was a place "where people were more interested in what they didn't know than in what they did."[120]

112. Xanti Schawinsky, "Spectodrama: Contemporary Studies," *Leonardo* 2, no. 3 (July 1969): 286.
113. See Erickson, "Chance Encounters."
114. Charles Olson, "Proprioception," *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 181.
115. M. C. Richards, *Centering: In Pottery, Poetry, and the Person* (1964; repr., Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 9.
116. Ibid., 13.
117. Frankforter, class notes.
118. Anni Albers, "Handweaving Today: Textile Work at Black Mountain College," *The Weaver* 6, no. 1 (January–February 1941): 3.
119. *Black Mountain College Bulletin* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1952), PC 1678, Duberman Collection, College Publications. Cited in Katherine Markoski, "Elective Affinities: Artistic Practice at Black Mountain College, 1948–1953," PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2013, 218.
120. John Chamberlain, quoted in Robert Creeley, "Olson and Black Mountain College," in *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, 302.



Susan Weil, *Secrets*, 1949. Graphite and paper on board, 10 x 10 inches.

12
GOSSIP

Despite the current vogue in contemporary art and theory for the archive, I must confess I don't like them.[121] All that dried-out paper. The musty smell. The rules and regulations. Not my kind of party. Plus I'm at least as likely to be overwhelmed by what's not there as by what is. The Western Regional Archives at the State Archives of North Carolina contains boxes and boxes of photographs taken at Black Mountain College, and not one of them documents John Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1*. (The archives are overseen by a force of nature, Heather South. Without her reservoir of good will and good humor, I never would have been able to survive my archive anxiety.) Reams of paper promise a veritable treasure trove: needles, haystacks.

Then there's the problem of the dead. They have no privacy. I sat, bewildered, at the Getty Research Institute reading M. C. Richards's love letters to David Tudor. Their correspondence betrays a fairly one-sided affair, as Richards extolls the virtues of the everyday, while imploring Tudor to respond. Why do all love letters sound the same? Why do people so consistently couple along the romantic-unromantic axis? Why am I reading these private letters? In Tudor's papers, I came across a letter from Cage, an apology, the kind of letter one writes after one has overstepped a line: did Cage come on to Tudor? If he did, it's clear he was roundly rejected. Later that day, the curator of the collection told me that Ray Johnson and Richard Lippold, who met at Black Mountain, became lovers when they returned to New York. Was I the last to know? My mind reels: why does Martin Duberman refer to Jess as Robert Duncan's "friend"? Was the Albers marriage as open as it seems from the letters? Whose recollection of *Theater Piece No. 1* should we trust?

On each research junket, I picked up a tidbit of extraneous information, which I judiciously/pompously chose not to transcribe into any of my three Black Mountain notebooks. Not relevant. Not publishable. What does that have to do with art or the college or my argument? Even so, after picking up a tidbit at one stop, I'd deploy it at the next one, to soften someone up, to open a door, to impress, to assure people I had something new to say. Maybe I should have written them down after all, because now I don't have the box numbers for proper footnotes.

I suppose I thought that the archive would produce a set of facts that I could marshal into a narrative: they did and I have. But the gossip mounted, and it didn't consolidate the facts or the truths—which is one of its negative functions. Instead it cast a queer light on "official" documents, such as class notes, oral histories, and the many memoirs—even on Duberman's magisterial *Black Mountain College: An Experiment in Community*. The line between a historical document and gossip began to blur. For what are class notes if not hearsay, a form of creative translation, rife with the possibility of mishearing? Is an oral history conveyed in the 1970s—fifteen to twenty years after Black Mountain closed—by Duberman or Mary Emma Harris—any more or less reliable than the accounts from my interviews with Black Mountain College alumni thirty-five to fifty years later? And what is a memoir other than one person's fallible memory masquerading as authority? What was it about Black Mountain that led Duberman to insert himself and his own point of view and identity so thoroughly into his historical account of the college? And why have I continued this tradition of embedding self-doubt into my own attempt to come to terms with the myth of the college?

Questions like these led me to a recent spate of scholarship on gossip and the role it might play in the creation of historical narratives. Typically gendered feminine, seen as idle or malicious, perceived as a low form of culture, and fundamentally disparaged as neither serious nor reliable, gossip is undergoing something of a renaissance in the hands of queer theorists such as Gavin Butt and Irit Rogoff, who see its possibilities as a form of "postmodern testimony." Rather than bracket gossip off from fact, Butt suggests that gossip can "displace so-called verifiable truths" and render them "as projections of interpretive desire and curiosity."[122] This displacement in the name of articulating psychic investments in material is, for Butt, a way of queering "the very ways in which we might think of the evidential."[123] Hence my own internal pause when I found myself quoting class notes in this essay: what kind of veracity was I hoping to achieve? On the one hand, I told myself that I was returning authority to the student; on the other hand, I had to admit, I was also offering it as proof of my own due diligence as a "scholar."

Rogoff offers a slightly different tack: she is interested in understanding "the persistent appearance and reappearance of gossip in close vicinity to master narratives, in particular grandiose historical moments or achievements in Modernism."[124] For Rogoff, gossip appears as a narrative device that points to gaps and elisions in master narratives. Not fictional, but rather phantasmatic, gossip is an eruption in the text that betrays the desires of both the gossiper and her historian but also, and more importantly, destabilizes "a confident 'knowing,' since gossip is usually accompanied by certain qualifying frames."[125]

Gossip, then, is not a way of securing the authority of the writer; instead it acknowledges a kind of radical unknowability in which the authority of the text, of history, or of any overarching truth claims, remains in play. Such is the kind of text I hoped to write, for I felt certain that there could be no definitive text that could tell the story of the years between 1933 and 1957 in the environs of Black Mountain, North Carolina. Certainly, there are historical facts: who arrived where and when. And there are the undeniable social facts that shaped the place—the Depression, progressive education, World War II, the GI Bill—each of which contributed to the horizon of possibility, to paraphrase historian Ernst Bloch, engendered by the assembly of various groups of individuals and their ideals and ideas. But ultimately the logic of gossip spurred me to avoid the romance of a story with a beginning, middle, and end, in favor of a tale structured by polyphony, fragments, and a narrative strategy of alloverness. I wanted to heed Franz Kline's quip to Frank O'Hara: "To be right is the most terrific personal state that nobody is interested in."[126] Nonetheless I know that my own desire for Black Mountain remains bifurcated: I wanted to debunk the myth as much as I wanted to prove it true. (Because in an era such as ours, dominated as it is by the monetization of art and education, to work on a small art school where almost no one got paid is a kind of Hail Mary pass.) I knew all of this in a flash when, as I neared the end of an interview with Black Mountain's pottery instructor Karen Karnes, she said to me, benevolently, but with transparent exasperation: "You contemporary people have so many questions, because you think there are answers."[127]

121. See Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004): 3–22.
122. Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 7.
123. Ibid.
124. Irit Rogoff, "Gossip as Testimony," in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. Griselda Pollock (London: Routledge, 1996), 62.
125. Ibid., 63.
126. Frank O'Hara, *Art Chronicles 1954–1966* (New York: George Braziller, 1975), 52.
127. Karen Karnes, conversation with the author, December 3, 2013, Concord, MA.

A PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

RUTH ERICKSON

: revious spread Students leaving Lee Hall, Blue Ridge Assembly campus, for the Lake Eden work program, n.d.
:t Black Mountain College library, n.d.

John Rice, n.d.

Porch of Lee Hall at Blue Ridge Assembly campus, n.d.

What you do with what you know is the important thing. To know is not enough.

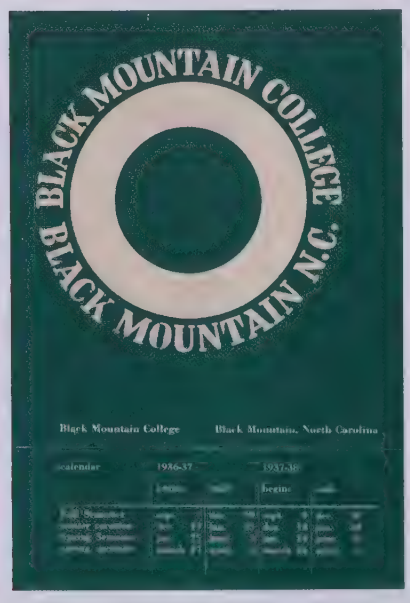
—John Rice[1]

There were no letter grades at Black Mountain College, nor were there required courses, set curricula, standard examinations, or prescribed teaching methods. The responsibility of education resided with the students, who advanced from the junior to senior division and ultimately graduated by completing, as the first college catalogue described, "comprehensive tests of [a student's] failure or success in meeting responsibility."[2] These individually tailored exams, which students undertook only when they felt prepared to do so (meaning that very few students ever graduated from Black Mountain), posed a series of diverse questions: "What did you learn from our studies with fall leaves?" "What do you think should be done about the Negro problem in the United States?" "Suppose that your task was to design a piano cover, what factors would you have to consider?" "What do you think we will laugh at in twenty years from now that we take very seriously today?"[3] Such questions sought to test not students' knowledge base but their critical, creative, and responsive acumen—that is, their ability to construct a color study, discuss political rights, and arrange plants in a garden with equanimity and self-reflection.

When John Rice established Black Mountain College in 1933, he sought to create a school that dissolved distinctions between curricular and extracurricular activities, that conceived of education and life as deeply intertwined, and that placed the arts at the center rather than at the margins of learning. Study at the college thus consisted of traditional liberal arts subjects—literature, biology, mathematics, foreign language, drama, music, the visual arts, and so forth—as well as participation in the college's functional operations and community. For Rice, education was registered not by grades or other standard criteria but in a heightened desire to learn and to question, which would lead students to an expanded aptitude for solving a range of problems and to a richer sense of self. The college's only examinations signal these priorities, testing students' capacity to engage imaginatively with the issues—philosophical, social, and practical—confronted in contemporary life. At Black Mountain, Rice told the writer Louis Adamic, "our central and consistent effort is to teach method, not content; to emphasize process, not results; to invite the students to the realization that the way of handling facts and himself amid the facts is more important than facts themselves."[4]

Rice's boyhood education at the Webb School in Buck Bell, Tennessee, informed his vision. That school's founder, John Webb, first modeled the pedagogy that Rice would come to praise and emulate.[5] As Rice recalled in his autobiography, Webb's "mind was fertile with ways for bringing boys to knowledge. . . . His pupils acquired respect for their own capacity, for he made each of them an artist for the moment, with his own

1. John Rice, "Fundamentalism and the Higher Learning," *Harper's Magazine*, May 1937, 595.
2. Foreword to *Black Mountain College Catalogue* (1933–1934), Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
3. See examples of Black Mountain College examinations, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
4. Louis Adamic, "Education on a Mountain," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1936, 519. An expanded version of this essay appears in Adamic's *My America* (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1938).
5. Brothers Sawney and John Webb founded the Webb School on the heels of the Civil War in Bell Buckle, Tennessee. It was at the Webb School that Rice first taught.



top: Theodore Dreier and Cynthia Carr carrying wood, n.d
bottom: Black Mountain College course catalogues 1935–36, 1936–37, and 1940–41.

top: Josef Breitenbach, *John Dewey*, 1943. Gelatin silver print, 13 5/8 x 10 5/8 inches.
bottom: Richard Carpenter and student with microscope, n.d.

Porch of the dining hall on Lake Eden campus, n.d.

private goal."[6] Employing a Socratic method—posing questions and encouraging students to discover their own paths to answers—rather than conveying information directly, Webb inspired Rice's approach as a teacher. This formation not only inclined Rice to uphold the ideals of progressive education but also instilled in him skepticism of the soft intellectualism that befell many progressive initiatives. "When I bore the dubious title of educator and at last was tagged with the still more dubious 'Progressive,'" Rice recalls, "I visited schools and listened to breathless accounts of the latest things. I could match them point by point from the Webb School I knew as a student and go them one better—two better, for the school had both order and intellectual backbone."[7]

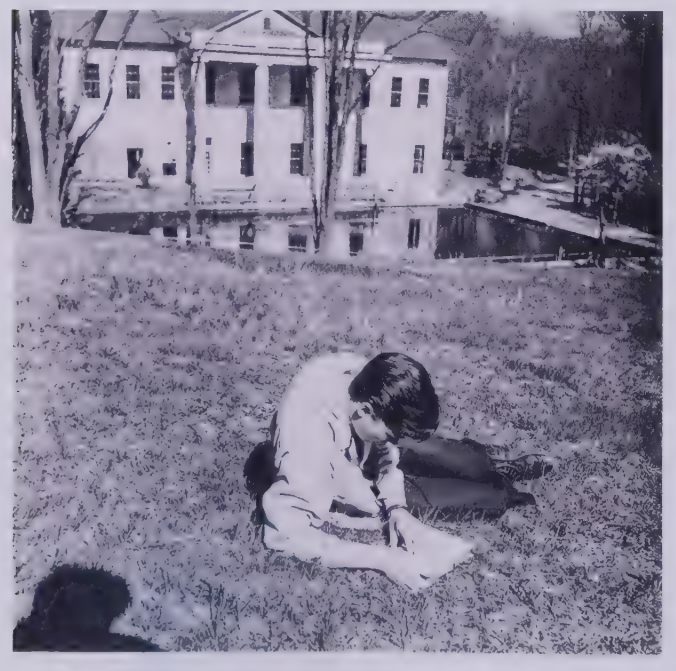
By the 1930s, John Dewey's proposals for progressive education, promoting experimental and innovative learning through self-directed experiences in and outside the classroom, led to the blossoming of numerous institutions. Indeed, Rice first met Dewey in 1931, when Dewey came to Rollins College to chair the Conference on Curriculum for the College of Liberal Arts, a meeting that brought together representatives from many liberal arts colleges that had emerged in the 1920s and 1930s to enact models of progressive education.[8] These included Sarah Lawrence (opened in 1926), Antioch (reorganized in 1921), and Bennington (opened in 1931 by progressive educator William Kilpatrick).[9] Dewey had argued since the late 1890s that schools served an essential social function by cultivating freethinking and well-informed individuals who would fully participate in democratic society. In *Democracy and Education*, he wrote, "The criterion of the value of school education is the extent in which it creates a desire for continued growth."[10] Through Dewey, Rice discovered a means of linking his convictions about pedagogy with his commitment to democracy, and at Black Mountain Dewey found an example of his educational philosophy in practice.

Dewey visited Black Mountain multiple times, ultimately joining the board of advisers and donating hundreds of books to the college library. While he never spoke in detail about the college, Dewey understood it to be deeply intertwined with democracy. In a letter to Rice following his first visit in 1935, Dewey wrote, "No matter how the present crisis comes out, the need for the kind of work the College does is imperative in the long-run interests of democracy. The College exists at the very 'grass roots' of a democratic way of life."[11] Like other progressive schools of higher education, Black Mountain College offered a more horizontal model of governance, empowering faculty instead of trustees to lead the school and involving the entire school community in discussions about major decisions. Furthermore, teaching staff, their families, and students shared housing, so that, as the first college catalogue

6. John Rice, *I Came out of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Harper's and Brothers, 1942) 209–10.
7. Ibid., 205.
8. Rice taught classics at Rollins College and was ultimately dismissed, leading him to form Black Mountain College with three other Rollins College faculty who left in support of him: Ralph Lounsbury, Frederick Georgia, and Theodore Dreier.
9. Katherine C. Reynolds, "Progressive Ideals and Experimental Higher Education: The Example of John Dewey and Black Mountain College," *Education and Culture* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 1–2. Other progressive liberal arts institutions of note include Bard College (opened in 1935) and Goddard College (opened in 1937).
10. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1915), in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899 1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 9 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 51.
11. John Dewey, quoted in Karl-Heinz Füssl, "Pestalozzi in Dewey's Realm? Bauhaus Master Josef Albers among the German-Speaking Emigrés' Colony at Black Mountain College (1933–1949)," *Paedagogic Historica* 42, nos. 1–2 (February 2006): 81.

Robert Babcock's political-science class in a living-room space, n.d.
tom Students on the porch of Lee Hall, n.d.

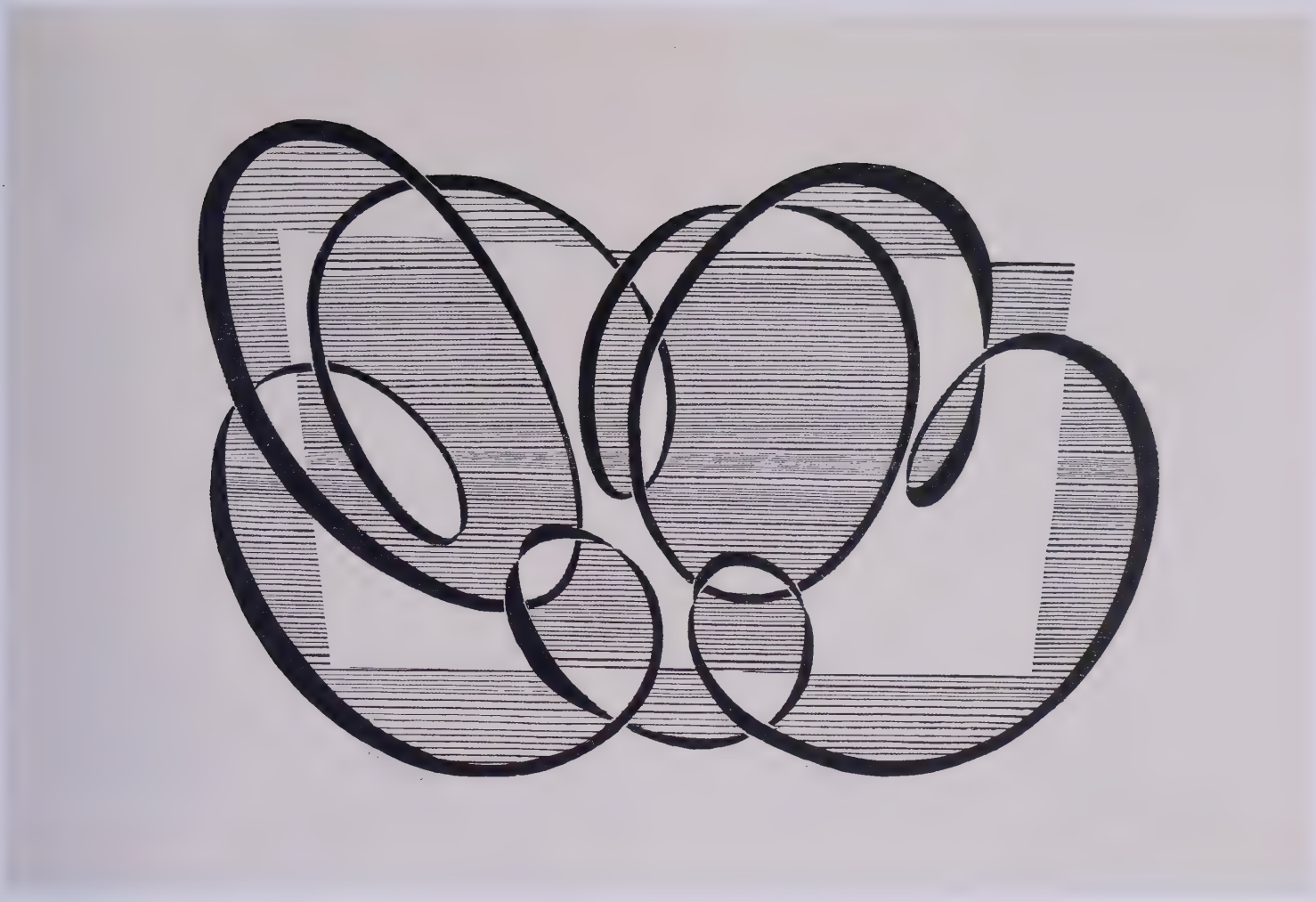
Student reading on the lawn near Lee Hall, n.d.



explained, "the relation is not so much of teacher to student as of one member of the community to another."[12]

What most distinguished Black Mountain from other schools was the vital role that the arts played in the college's democratic aims. Both Rice and Dewey valued the creative and emotional aspects of human development and believed that art—or the "art experience"—was essential for nurturing an individual's capacity to participate in a democracy. The arts, according to Rice, are "least subject to direction from without and yet have within them a severe discipline of their own."[13] An art experience, as Dewey outlined in *Art as Experience* (1934), was about discovering and respecting the integrity of one's materials. Black Mountain College literature echoed this sentiment: "Through some kind of art experience, which is not necessarily the same as self-expression, the student can come to the realization of order in the world; and, by being sensitized to movement, form, sound, and the other media of the arts, gets a firmer control of himself and his environment than is possible through purely intellectual effort."[14] The theory is that the process of making art hones not only observation but also judgment and action, so that students who acquire intelligence through art both notice what is happening around them and develop individual responses to it. In Rice's words, "The artist thinks about what he himself is going to do, does it himself, and then reflects upon the thing that he himself has done."[15] By encouraging both self-reflection and the translation of thought into action, pedagogy at Black Mountain began with art to end with democracy.

12. Foreword to *Black Mountain College Catalogue* (1933–1934), 1.
13. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1934). Dewey originally delivered these essays as a series of lectures at Harvard University in 1932.
14. Foreword to *Black Mountain College Catalogue* (1933–1934), 3.
15. John Rice, quoted in Louis Adamic, "Education on a Mountain," excerpted in *Black Mountain College: Sprouted Seeds, An Anthology of Personal Accounts*, ed. Mervin Lane (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 58



Josef Albers, *Encircled*, 1933. Woodcut, sheet size 13 ¾ x 20 ⅛ inches.

Amédée Ozenfant, *Untitled*, 1944. Graphite and pastel on watercolor board, 22 x 30 inches.

Nancy Newhall, *"Mae West," North Carolina, Black Mountain College*, 1948/1990.
Gelatin silver print, 7 ½ x 9 ½ inches.

Black Mountain College pamphlet, c. 1949

JOSEF ALBERS
Photographs of Matières

MICHAEL BEGGS

Matière studies were a staple of Josef Albers's pedagogy throughout his time at Black Mountain College. Initially developed at the Bauhaus, the *matière* studies were exercises in texture and material interaction. To produce them, students combined found materials in tableaux in order to obscure the original materials' specific identities. A strip of bark taken from its normal context on the forest floor and nailed to a flat piece of light wood looked like a miniature animal skin; cigarette ashes and gray pebbles assembled on a gray flannel background became indistinguishable from one another. Like much of Albers's teaching at Black Mountain, the *matière* was at once technically simple and conceptually complex.

For many Black Mountain College students, the *matière* was the defining exercise of Albers's pedagogy. It permeated the college's collective conscience, appearing in jokes, everyday conversation, and even in song: "Let your room stay in a mess," a line from one chorus went, "it's ma-ti-ère."[1] Any and all materials—from kitchen scraps and natural detritus to broken machinery and construction materials—were used, and the results varied greatly. *Matières* could be composed of a single material or dozens of individual pieces. There were studies of textural affinities and contrasts, illusory studies where one material was made to mimic another or appear at odds with its inherent character (for instance, a hard material made to look soft), and studies that did not so much transform materials as create entirely new visual or haptic experiences. Whatever form they took, the basic pedagogic premise was constant: by taking textures out of their normal contexts and placing them in relationship to one another, Albers's students suddenly began to see the world of materials around them more acutely.

Ruth Asawa recalled that when Ray Johnson made a *matière* out of tent caterpillar nests and a shiny material, "nobody could really see what it was. . . . He took something that you normally would just see in a tree and say, 'oh, that's a caterpillar's nest,' . . . but when you cut it away from that and brought it in, presented it on a hard surface, like foil, a metallic surface, then you couldn't relate it to anything. So it became something else."[2] The way in which Albers critiqued these exercises was what made it work as a learning exercise: "It was his excitement at seeing a *matière* that made the difference," Elizabeth Schmitt Jennerjahn recalled. "He'd go crazy at seeing these pieces that people brought in. . . . I did one piece using pressed fern leaves and mica, and put a huge amount of work into it. What would make a young girl go out and do all that? It was the fact that he so totally gave himself to the pieces that we brought in."[3]

top Josef Albers in a drawing class, c. 1939–40.
bottom Graduate exhibition by Jane Slater, installation view, March 1945.

1. "Matière Song," JA 41.4, Josef Albers Papers, Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, CT
2. Ruth Asawa, interview with Frederick Horowitz, July 31, 1995, conducted for Brenda Danilowitz and Frederick A. Horowitz, *Josef Albers: To Open Eyes* (New York: Phaidon, 2006)
3. Elizabeth Schmitt Jennerjahn, interview with Frederick Horowitz, December 7, 1995, conducted for Danilowitz and Horowitz, *Josef Albers*

Ray Johnson, *matière* study of tent caterpillar nests and reflective paper, c. 1945–48.
Photograph by Theodore Dreier. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.

Inevitably, some *matières*, such as those made with rotten meat, ashes, or beaten egg whites, barely survived for several hours, let alone for weeks or years.[4] Most were probably disassembled after class, with elements returned to their intended uses or to the garbage cans from which they had been scavenged. Longevity was not a priority: these were temporal, didactic creations made for a moment of apprehension or disbelief in the classroom.[5] Instead of keeping favorite *matières*, as he did with work in other media, Albers used photography to document them.

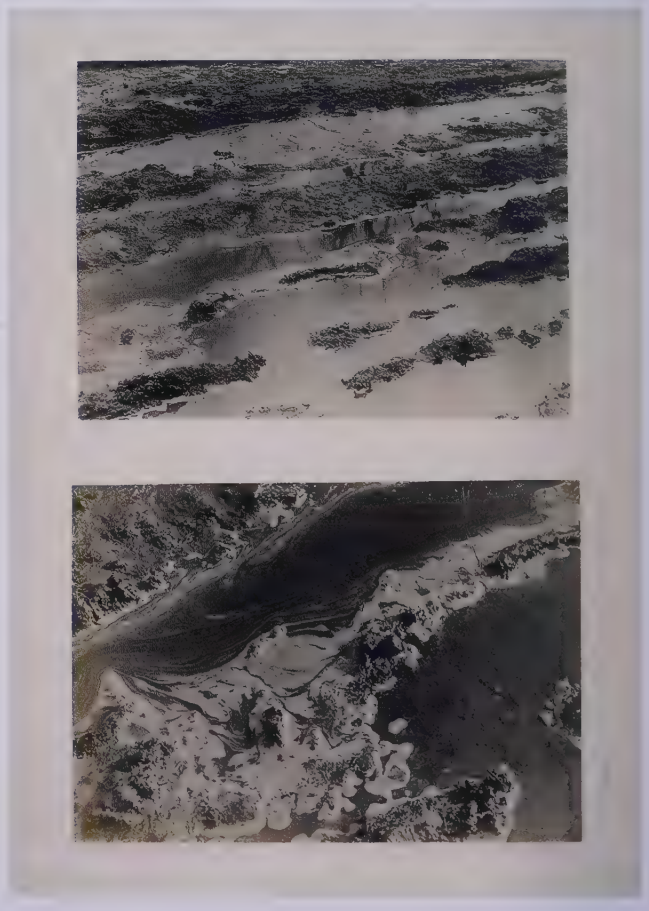
Color was an essential element of many *matière* illusions, and Albers regularly photographed *matières* in vivid Kodachrome, despite its cost. In one image, crumpled paper merges into wood, which merges into concrete, all aided by their gray-brown color. The illusion might have registered had it been documented in black and white, but it is far more pronounced in color. Given Albers's accomplishments as a photographer, these pictures are much more than documentation; they are the result of his greater fascination with how photography represents texture. Albers was particularly aware that photography is a reductive process that flattens through projection. In a photograph, the haptic becomes primarily visual, and texture is transformed into pattern.[6]

Albers regularly explored texture in his own photography, and some of his photographs resemble *matières*. In several photographs from 1931, mud fills the frame and appears solid, like cooled wax or cast bronze. We recognize that mud is depicted, but its inherent character—soft, wet, and mutable—is obscured. At Black Mountain College, Albers explored this interest in texture and photography during class and in lectures. Probably with the help of his students, he collected hundreds of examples of photographic representations of textures from fashion advertisements or articles in illustrated magazines such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Life*. Albers and his students then critiqued these found photographs as *matières*. Did the fur coat in an advertisement look soft and sensual or hard and hostile? How did the textures in a photograph interact? Discussing a fashion photograph of a young woman, Albers commented, "See how the two different surfaces help each other; the smooth skin and the crinkly lace. The photographer chose the material to enhance the beauty of her skin." A whiskey advertisement containing ice and roses was deemed "cruel but interesting."[7]

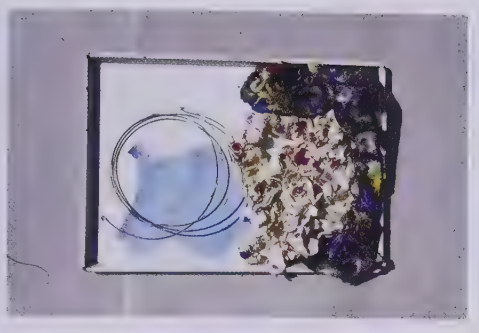
It is fitting that most of Albers's own photographs of *matières* were in the form of slides, rather than prints. The projected image is a temporal and didactic medium. It is displayed, apprehended, explained, and then replaced. Given their temporal nature, we can see why Albers chose photography in an attempt to preserve his *matières* beyond their short shelf life. They were not made for posterity: there was always more to see, more to experience, and more to be made.

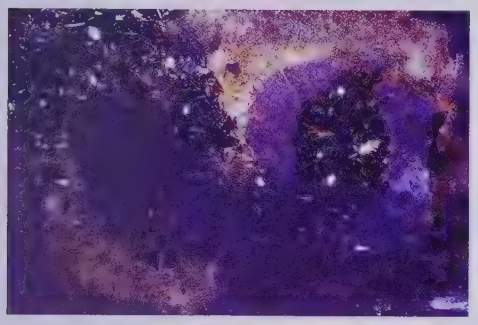
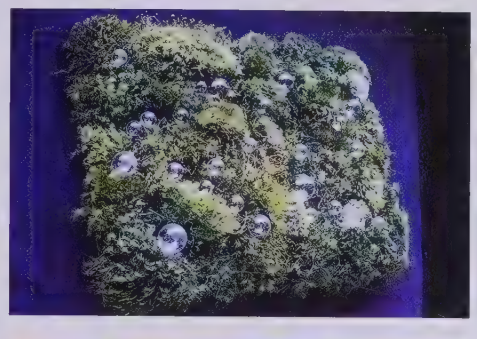
Students working on *matière* studies, n.d.

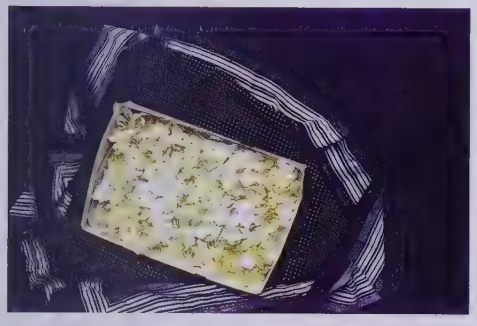
below. Josef Albers, *Dessau Flurstrasse während Neubauten, Frühjahr '31*, 1931. Gelatin silver print, 16 1/8 x 11 5/8 inches. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.
opposite. Black Mountain College student *matière* studies, c. 1940–49. Photos by Josef Albers.

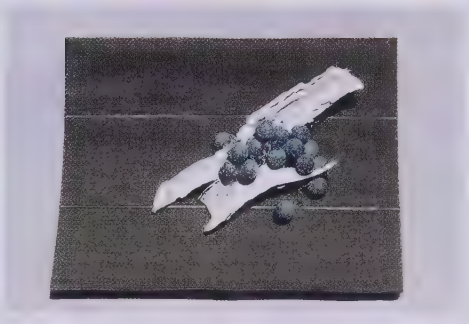


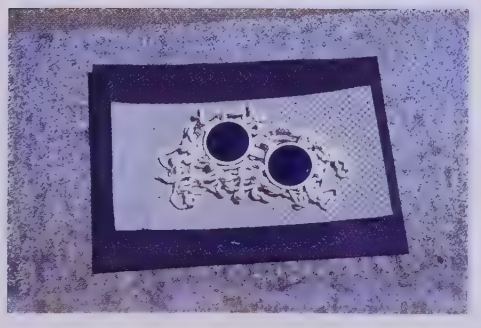
4. *Matières* made using these materials are recorded in student remembrances and in Josef Albers's photographic negatives
5. Jeffrey Saletnik writes that *matières* were "intended to be didactic objects." Jeffrey Saletnik, "Pedagogic Objects," in *Bauhaus Construct*, ed. Jeffrey Saletnik and Robin Schuldenfrei (London: Routledge, 2009), 94.
6. In 1943, in his only lengthy written statement on photography, Albers wrote: "A flat picture cannot be spatial as we perceive the world around us. All paintings, drawings, prints, as projections, are flat, two-dimensional, as photos are. But most ways of pictorial projection have devices to produce an illusion of three-dimensionality which photography cannot apply or only to a smaller extent. Therefore, photos represent the flattest type of picture." Josef Albers, "Photos as Photography and Photos as Art," unpublished typescript for slide lecture given at Black Mountain College, February 24, 1943, JA 84.11, Josef Albers papers, Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, CT.
7. Josef Albers, "Fundamental Design of Today," quoted in Frederick Horowitz and Brenda Danilowitz, *Josef Albers: To Open Eyes* (London: Phaidon, 2006), 129

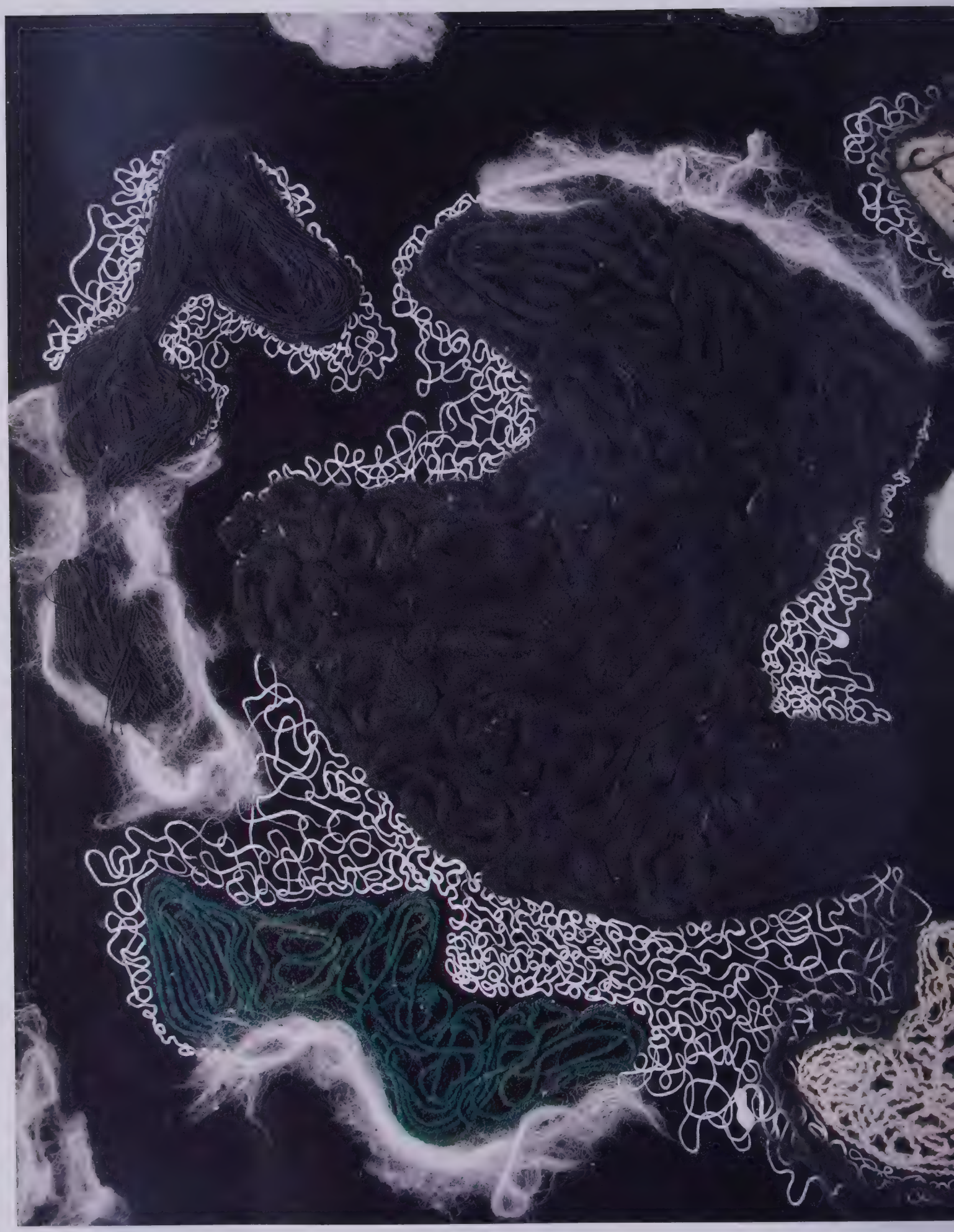






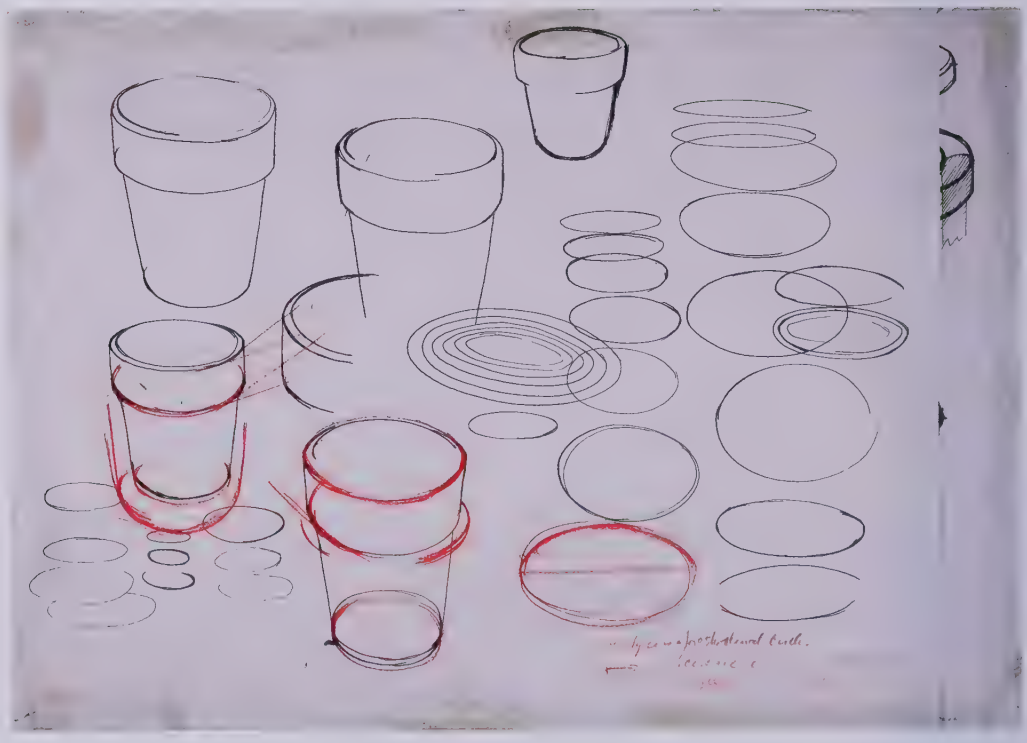




John Reiss, *Black and White Yarns*, n d. Collage, 14 x 22 inches

Josef Breitenbach, *Untitled*, c. 1946–49. Gelatin silver print, 13 ¾ x 11 inches

Josef Albers, *Leaf Study IX*, c. 1940. Leaves on paper, 28 x 24 ¾ inches.

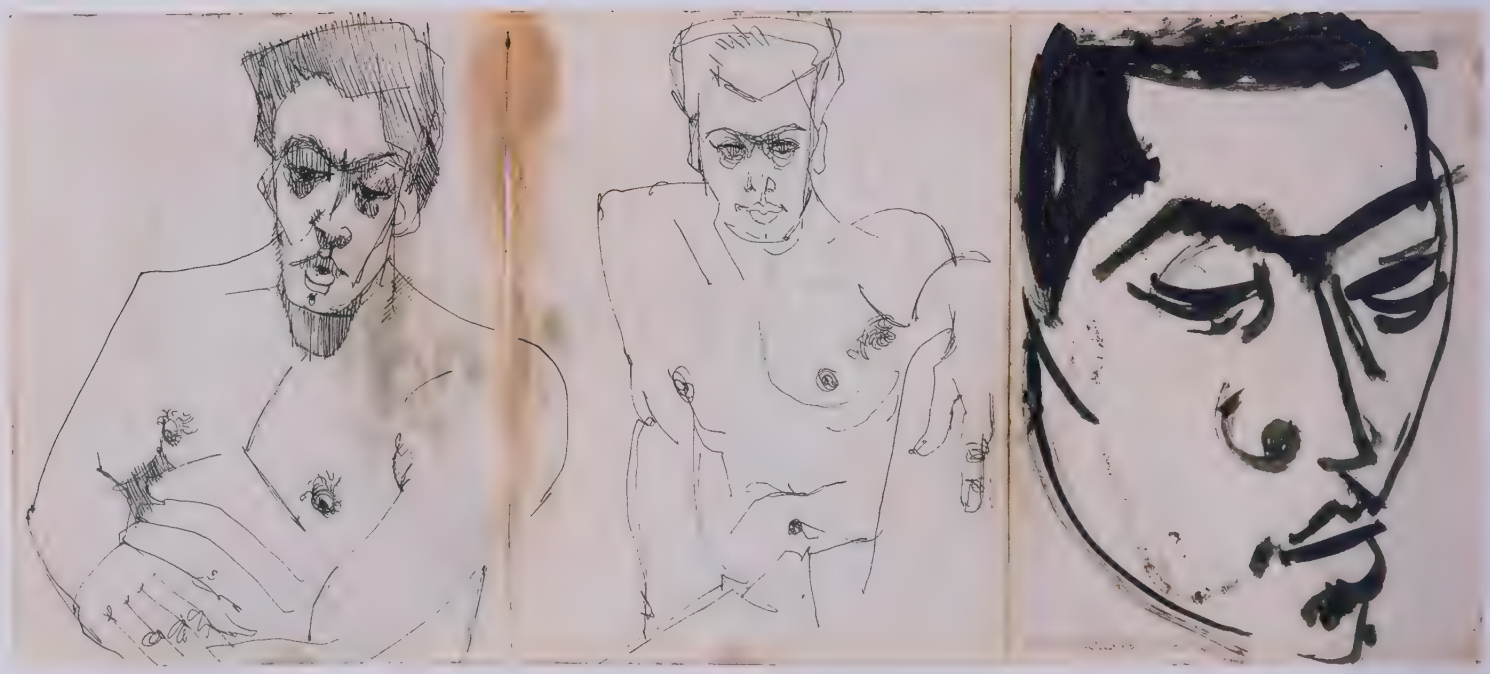


top, left Don Page, *Potted Plant Still Life*, n.d. Gouache on paper, 18 x 13 inches.
top, right Evelyn Bullock dressed for costume party at the 1949 Summer Art Institute. Photo by Dina Woelffer.
bottom Eini Sihvonen, *Untitled (Flower Pots)*, 1947–49. Colored pencil and ink on wove paper, 18 x 24 ⅛ inches.

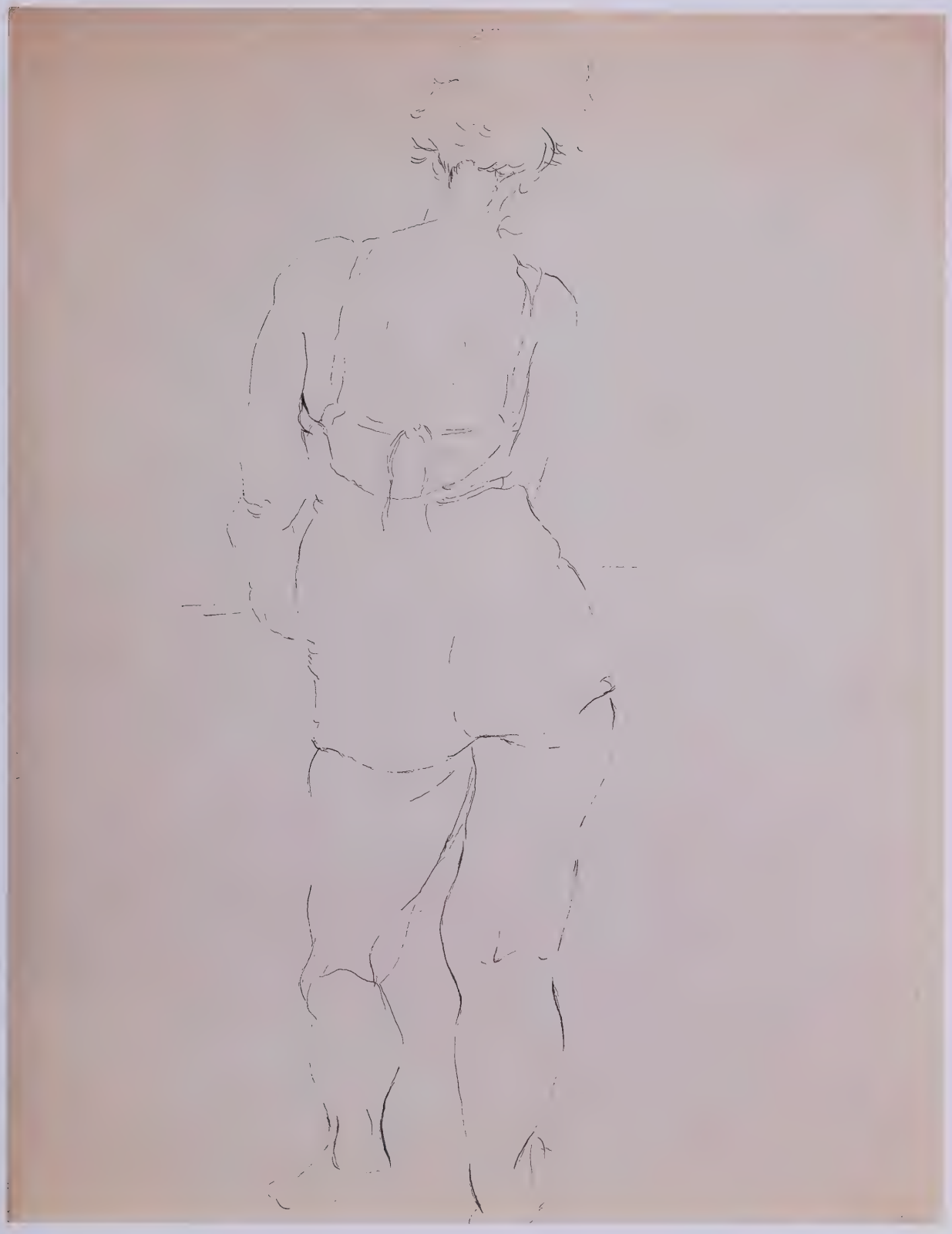
Ati Gropius Johansen, *Still Life, Leaves*, n.d. Watercolor on wove paper, 23 x 20 inches.

Susan Weil, *Untitled*, 1950. Ink and watercolor on paper, 13 ¾ x 11 inches.

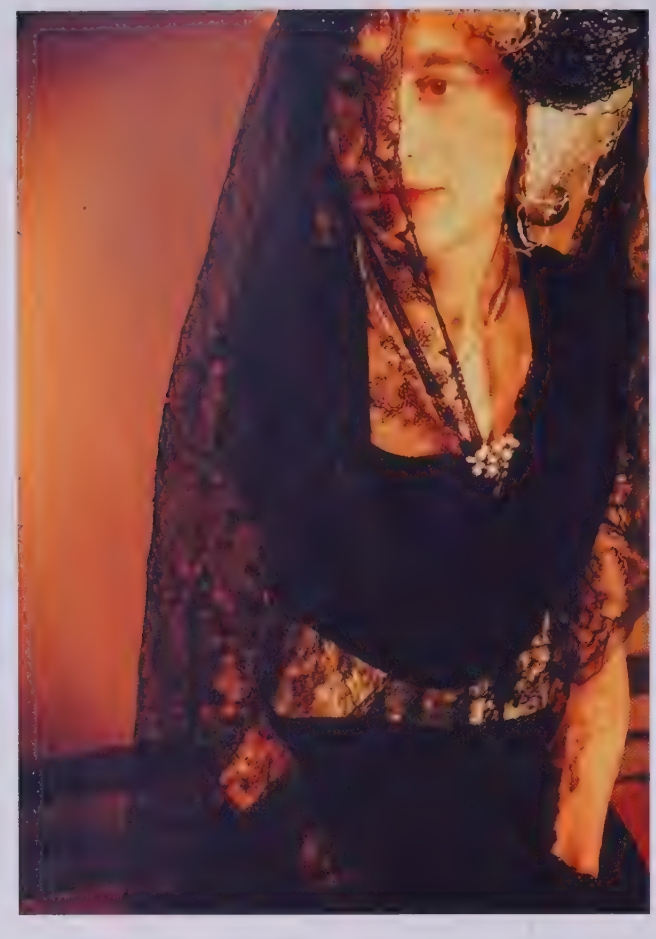
Elaine Schmitt Urbain, *Black Mountain College (Ruth Asawa)*, 1946. Watercolor on paper, 22 ¾ x 18 ⅜ inches.

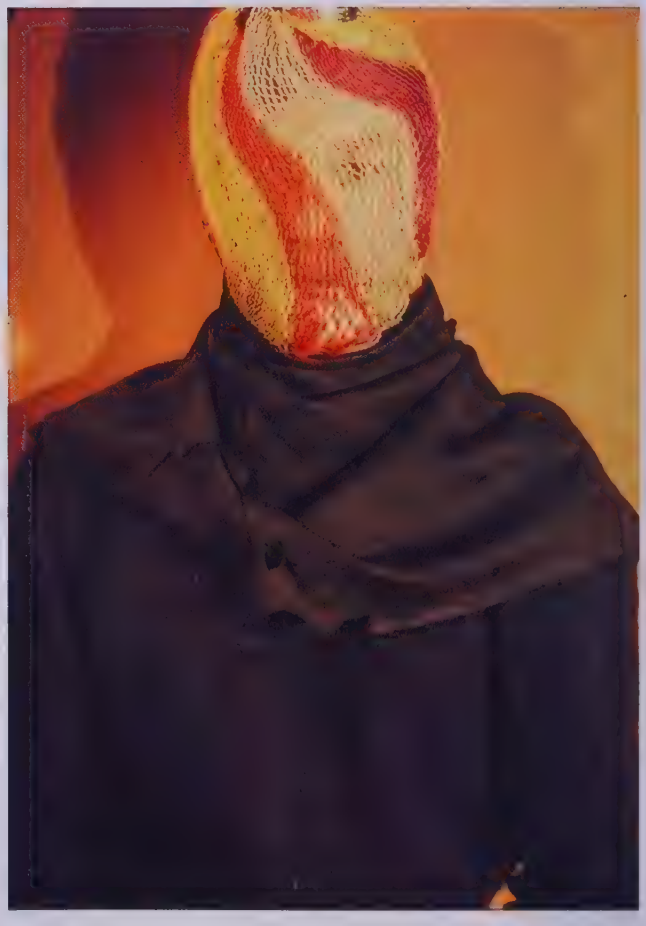


top Ati Gropius Johansen, *Untitled Woman and Two Men*, n.d. Ink on paper, 8 1/8 x 16 3/4 inches
bottom Gerald Van de Wiele, *Portrait Sketches of Jorge Fick*, n.d. Ink on paper, 10 1/8 x 22 7/8 inches



Susan Weil, *Untitled (Figure Albers Class)*, 1948. Graphite and ink on paper, 22 x 17 inches.





Black Mountain College students and faculty in costume for Valentine's Day Ball, 1940
Kodachrome slides by Josef Albers

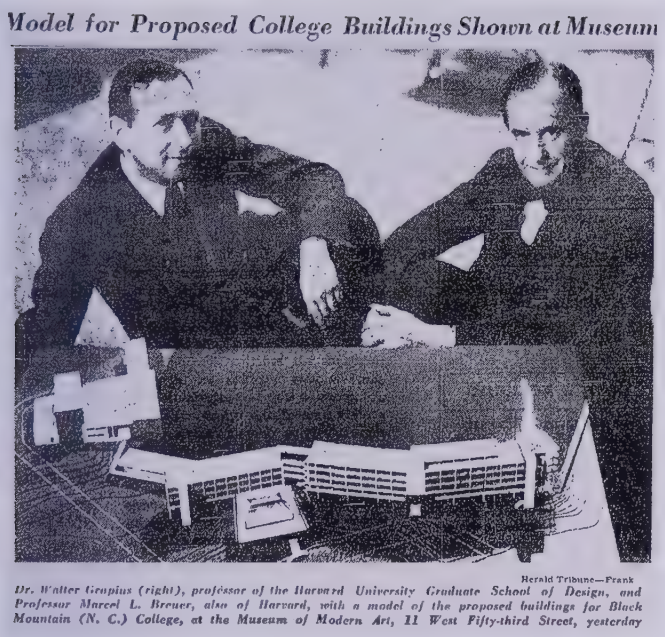
BAUHAUS IN AMERICA

JEFFREY SALETNIK

College property across the valley

Design and photos (except Lee Hall and back cover) by students and faculty of B M C

Marcel Breuer, *Black Mountain College*, 1938–39. Photocollage, ink, graphite, and gouache on paper, 12 7/8 x 20 1/8 inches. Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of Walter Gropius.



Model for Proposed College Buildings Shown at Museum

Herald Tribune—Frank

Dr. Walter Gropius (right), professor of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, and Professor Marcel L. Breuer, also of Harvard, with a model of the proposed buildings for Black Mountain (N. C.) College, at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West Fifty-third Street, yesterday

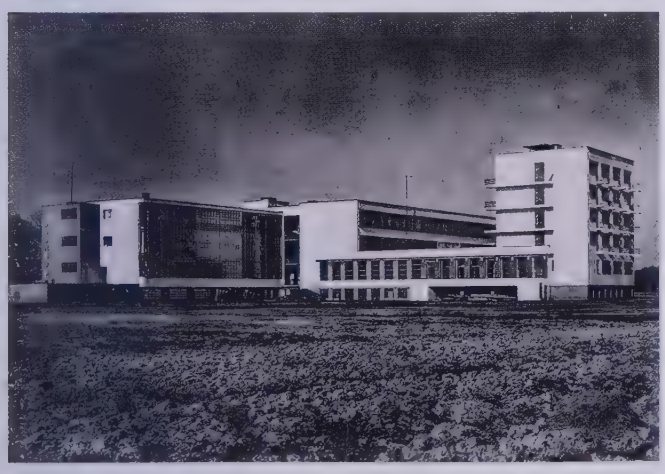
Page from *New York Herald Tribune*, January 10, 1940.

The appointment of Josef Albers to the faculty of Black Mountain College introduced to the curriculum instructional methods comparable to those employed at the Bauhaus and facilitated the involvement of an influential network of *Bauhaüsler* with the college. Bauhaus students Anni Albers and Xanti Schawinsky became long-term members of the college faculty.[1] Others who made their way on various paths to Black Mountain during Albers's tenure were architect Howard Dearstyne, one of few Americans to have studied at the Bauhaus; Bauhaus student Marli Ehrman, a weaver; and Lyonel Feininger, a long-standing affiliate of the Bauhaus who crafted the woodcut that famously illustrated the school's founding document.[2] Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus's first director, was a frequent lecturer at Black Mountain on topics such as "Site and Shelter after the War" during the 1944, 1945, and 1946 summer sessions.[3] He also served on the college's advisory council from 1940 to 1949, was frequently consulted about staffing issues, and his daughter, Ati Gropius Johansen, attended Black Mountain in the mid-1940s, owing, in part, to Albers's Bauhaus-indebted curriculum. Gropius claimed that he wished "every one of our students could go though [Albers's] courses" before enrolling at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, where he had assumed a teaching position in 1937.[4] In 1939, the college commissioned Gropius and former Bauhaus master Marcel Breuer to design a complex of academic buildings for its Lake Eden campus, which would have been the architects' first significant building project in the United States; however, the college's perennial lack of funds prohibited the construction of the buildings.[5]

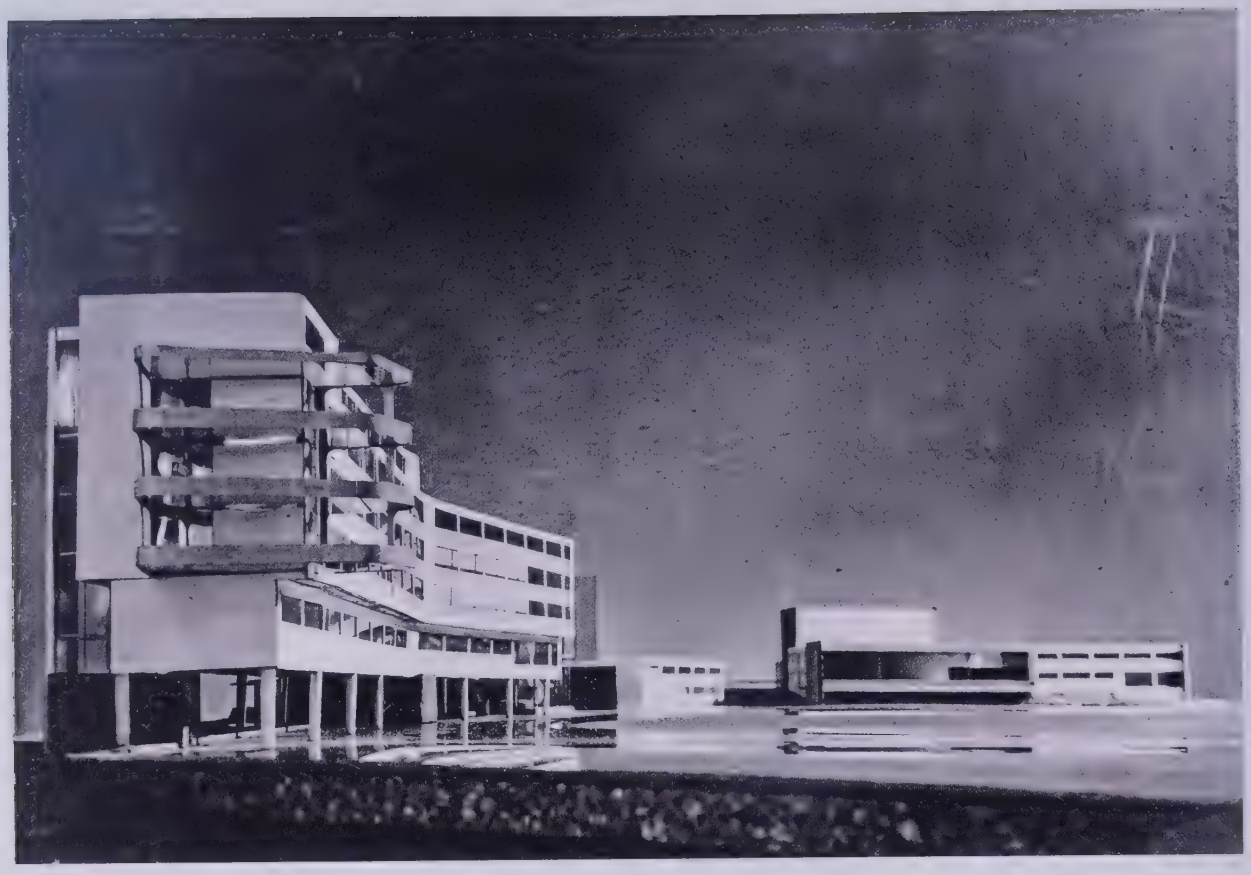
Gropius continued to promote the Bauhaus in advanced discourse on architecture and planning through the middle decades of the twentieth century, and his commitment to the success of Black Mountain corresponds to his desire to see the spread of Bauhaus ideas. He made plain this legacy by reproducing exercises made by Albers's Black Mountain students in the final pages of the Museum of Modern Art's *Bauhaus 1919–1928* catalogue, which Gropius coedited.[6]

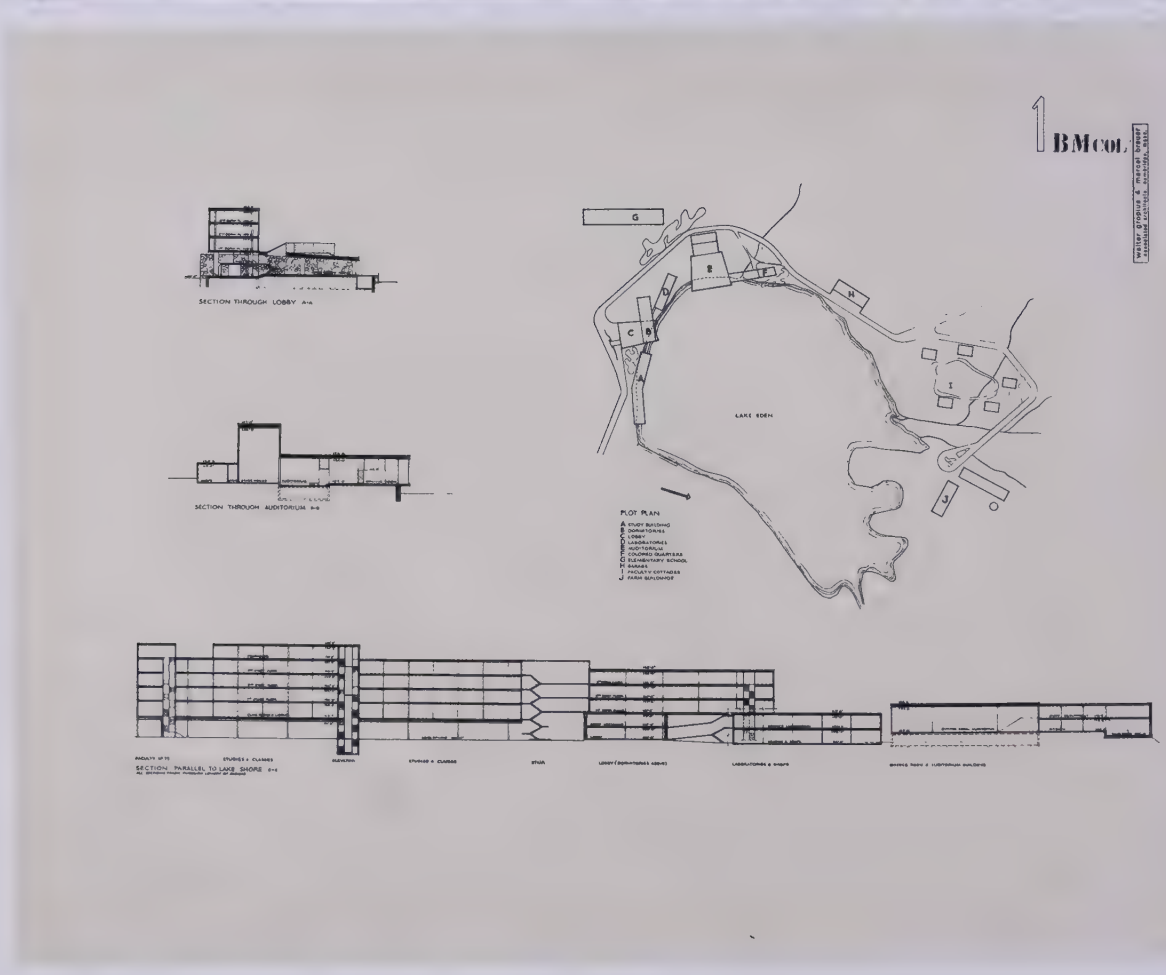
Despite the seeming symbiosis between the Bauhaus and Black Mountain, there existed a fundamental disjunction between the professionalizing impetuses of the German design school and the aims of the American college. Educational endeavors at Black Mountain were meant to induce understanding of various principles through experimentation—to discover, that is, relationships rather than to rehearse and demonstrate preconceived ideas. Most students at the Dessau Bauhaus began their studies by taking Albers's Preliminary Course, which was meant to introduce them to design as an

Bauhaus Building in Dessau, Germany, c. 1926. Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of James Elliot.



1. Anni Albers taught weaving and textile design between 1933 and 1949; Xanti Schawinsky taught stage studies and other subjects from 1936 to 1938.
2. Howard Dearstyne taught architecture during the 1941–42 academic year; Lyonel Feininger taught painting during the 1945 summer session; Marli Ehrman taught weaving during the 1949 summer session. Subsequent to Albers's departure from the faculty, Bauhaus student and ceramist Marguerite Wildenhain taught at Black Mountain in fall 1952. Composer Stefan Wolpe, who had studied at the Weimar Bauhaus, taught at Black Mountain between 1952 and 1956.
3. See Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 94.
4. Walter Gropius, letter to Josef Albers, February 14, 1945, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC. Gropius encouraged the Graduate School of Design to hire Albers, who was offered a position in 1940 but declined it. See Jill Pearlman, *Inventing American Modernism: Joseph Hudnut, Walter Gropius, and the Bauhaus Legacy at Harvard* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 206.
5. Marcel Breuer lectured at and served as external reviewer for graduates of the college.
6. See *Bauhaus 1919 1928*, ed. Herbert Bayer et al. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 205–17. Bayer organized the exhibition with the assistance of fellow *Bauhaüsler*, including Gropius, Josef Albers, and Xanti Schawinsky





top Photo showing model of unrealized design for Black Mountain College campus, Lake Eden, 1939, by Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius
bottom Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius, site plan and elevations for the Lake Eden campus, 1939.

Josef Albers, desk for Black Mountain College students, c. 1938. Wood, 29 x 44 x 26 inches.

active process through the investigation of various materials.[7] Students would begin this process without a specific finished product in view; rather, they were challenged to find creative solutions to various design problems. Albers continued this approach at Black Mountain. By contrast, when a Bauhaus student completed the Preliminary Course, he or she would be placed in one of a few specialized workshops that focused on a material, such as metal, wood, or fiber, while also working toward collective Bauhaus goals, which included "collaboration in building" and the production of "standard [design] prototypes for industry and the crafts."[8] At Black Mountain, Albers's pedagogy honed the dynamics of intellectual emancipation and creative refinement for the sake of individual growth. In reflecting on his daughter's education, Gropius praised Albers for guiding her "to combine her talent of thinking in abstractions with her visual talent."[9]

The instructional methods Albers developed at the Bauhaus were well suited to the Black Mountain ethos and became a central aspect of its curriculum. Indeed, faculty often audited Albers's courses so as to better understand his pedagogy. John Rice attended his drawing course, and Irene Schawinsky, who taught dress design at the college, audited Albers's *Werklehre* course.[10] Faculty also discussed their respective pedagogies at designated weekly meetings.[11] This commitment to understanding one another's instructional methods was unlike Albers's experience at the Bauhaus, where, as he said, "I think we never had used the word 'education' once."[12] Although faculty pedagogies varied, many were in line with—and perhaps informed by—Albers's exploratory model. A description of Theodore Dreier's mathematics curriculum, for instance, may just as well have been written for one of Albers's courses: "The study of Mathematics is regarded as training in abstract thought; but abstract thought that is related to the world. The emphasis is of course on method, although practical problems are used."[13] The description continues in a way that points to the key distinction between the Bauhaus and Black Mountain and indicates Albers's prominent influence at the college: "It is considered more important . . . for a student to formulate for himself a relation between several variables than merely to manipulate an aggregate of symbols given by someone else. It is better still when he discovers an abstraction which links together diverse phenomena which had seemed unrelated."[14] Such was the essence of Albers's pedagogy.

Xanti Schawinsky, who had been a member of the Theater Workshop at the Bauhaus, also embraced the freedom afforded to him in Black Mountain's less outcome-driven liberal arts setting. His Stage Studies course was "not intended as a training for any particular branch of the contemporary theater but rather as a general study of fundamental phenomena," which included space, motion, and time.[15] For Schawinsky, theater was an interdisciplinary "curricular activity" at the college; the space of the stage provided physical parameters for curricular integration.[16] And, as had been the case at the Bauhaus with respect to the Theater Workshop and Preliminary Course, educational activities and community life commingled in events like the Valentine's Day party of 1940, where the students' costumes, documented by Albers in color slides (see pages 100–101), look remarkably like *matiére* studies performed earlier that day in class.

7. Albers was responsible for teaching this course with László Moholy-Nagy from 1923 to 1928 and solely from 1928 to 1933.
8. "The Bauhaus in Dessau, Curriculum" (November 1925), in Hans Maria Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 107–8.
9. Walter Gropius, letter to Josef Albers, May 10, 1946, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
10. See Xanti Schawinsky, "my 2 years at black mountain college, n.c.," March 7, 1973, series III, box 37. State Archives of North Carolina, Western Regional Archives, Asheville, NC.
11. See Katherine Chaddock Reynolds, *Visions and Vanities: John Andrew Rice of Black Mountain College* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 157–59.
12. Josef Albers, quoted in Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (New York: Dutton, 1972), 48.
13. See Black Mountain College catalogue, 1937–1938, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC, 18.
14. Ibid.
15. See Xanti Schawinsky, "From the Bauhaus to Black Mountain," *The Drama Review: TDR* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 44.
16. Xanti Schawinsky, "Spectodrama: Contemporary Studies," *Leonardo* 2, no. 3 (July 1969): 286. Schawinsky distinguished his Stage Studies course, which was listed as part of the art curriculum, from Robert Wunsch's Dramatics curriculum.

XANTI SCHAWINSKY

Spectodrama

(Black Mountain Stage Studies)

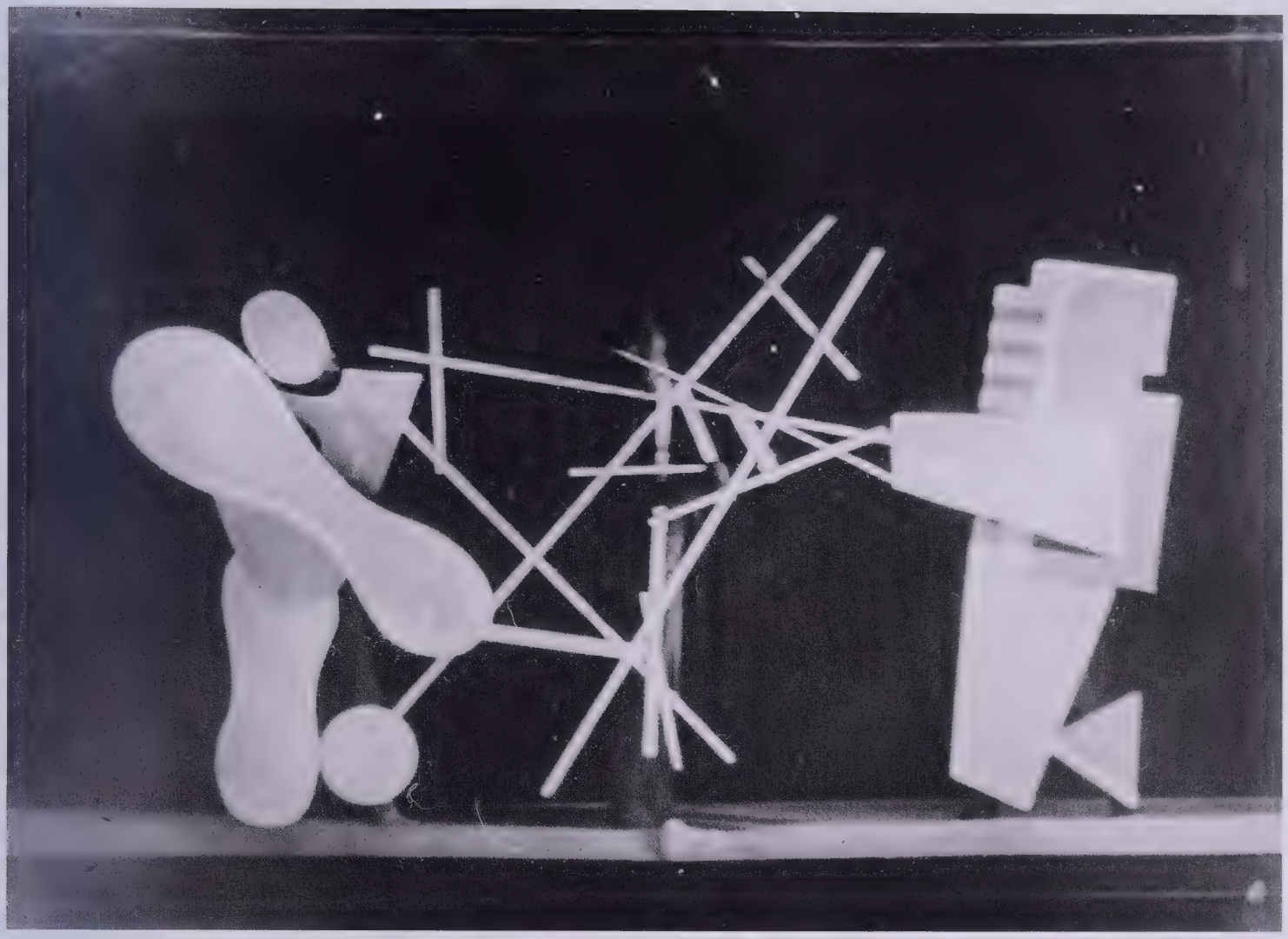
JEFFREY SALETNIK

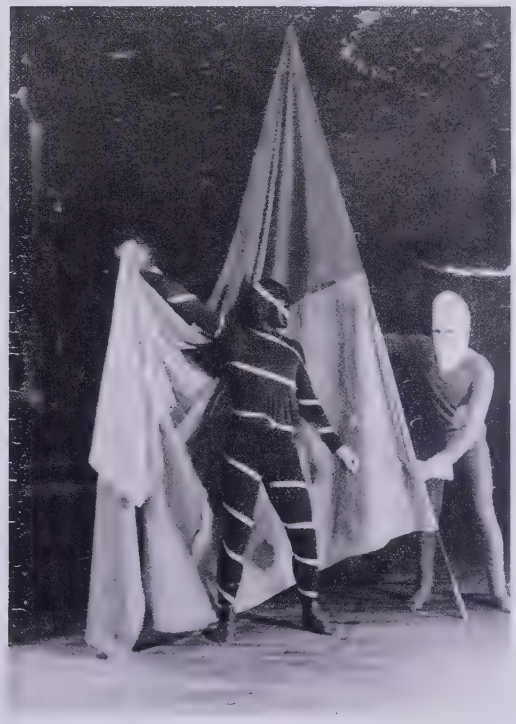
Xanti Schawinsky's 1927 design for a Constructivist stage depicts a fantastic space in which audience members were to be positioned on "islands" amid actors who performed on platforms, wheels, and a trampoline, and inside a glass-walled water tank.[1] The drawing's circular frame imagines a theater that—to invoke architectural historian Sigfried Giedion—leads to a "self-conscious enlargement of our way of perceiving space."[2] In Schawinsky's design, the space of performance and that of the viewer are uninterrupted: perception is relational and dependent on the audience's vantage point as multiple senses are engaged. For Schawinsky, a student at the Bauhaus between 1924 and 1929, design was an agent for honing spatial awareness. While at the school, he assisted Oskar Schlemmer in managing the Theater Workshop, which, as Schlemmer lamented, was secondary to the more product-oriented workshops there.[3] However historically significant the work of the Theater Workshop may have been, its activities were, according to Schlemmer, "to be enjoyed but kept on a short tether."[4]

Schawinsky, who wanted to bring Schlemmer to Black Mountain College, found himself in an altogether different atmosphere in North Carolina, where, within the context of a liberal arts college, he was able to utilize the stage as an entirely educational medium.[5] Beginning in 1936, he approached his Stage Studies course as a laboratory, a space in which students could build an understanding of the fundamentals of creating work for the stage, thereby employing the experimental logic of Albers's instruction, which Schawinsky admired.[6] The activities of the Stage Studies course culminated in a public performance of *Spectodrama: Play, Life, Illusion*, a four-part work that "comprise[d] the fields of optics, form and color, acoustics, sound, language, music, time, space, architecture, technology, and illusion."[7] In part one, scene seven of *Spectodrama*, two figurines composed of movable planes of contrasting colors were manipulated to show variation in chromatic intensity as different colors and forms overlapped one another.[8] The scene is simultaneously a performance, a demonstration, and a register of student work for the course. Indeed, Schawinsky's neologism *Spectodrama* combines the terms *Specto* (L. spectō: I observe, I see) and *drama* (L. drāma: play), thereby combining the roles of audience and performer in a piece that treated the stage as a complete work of art rather than a structure or apparatus.

Xanti Schawinsky teaching a portraiture class, n.d. Photo by Helen Post Modley.

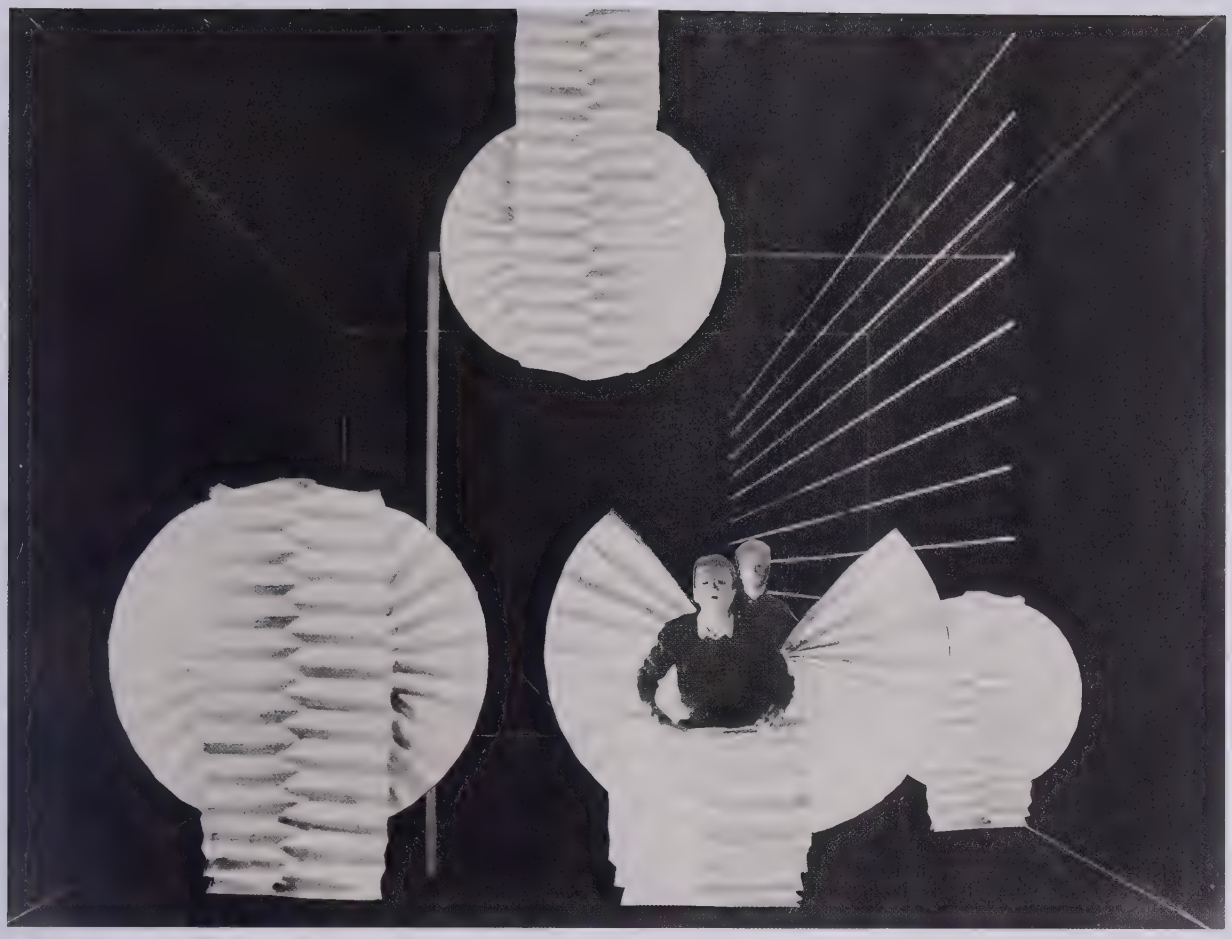
1. Xanti Schawinsky, "From the Bauhaus to Black Mountain," *The Drama Review: TDR* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 41–42.
2. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941), 436. This assertion accords with the author's famous claim about how the planes of glass and interlocking cubes in Walter Gropius's Bauhaus buildings in Dessau function.
3. Oskar Schlemmer also criticized the unequal distribution of funds among the Bauhaus workshops. See Oskar Schlemmer, "To Tut, October 17, 1927," in *The Letters and Diaries of Oskar Schlemmer*, ed. Tut Schlemmer, trans. Krishna Winston (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), 213
4. Oskar Schlemmer, "To Otto Meyer: April 17, 1927," in ibid., 203.
5. Oskar Schlemmer, "To Tut, August 23, 1936," in ibid., 356
6. See *Xanti Schawinsky: Malerei, Bühne, Grafikdesign, Fotografie*, ed. Peter Hahn (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1986), 188
7. Xanti Schawinsky, "Spectodrama: Contemporary Studies." *Leonardo* 2, no. 3 (July 1969), 286
8. Xanti Schawinsky, "Play, Life, Illusion," *The Drama Review: TDR*, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 50 Lighting enhanced these effects





top Xanti Schawinsky, *Spectodrama. Ecce Homo: Play, Life, Illusion (Stage Studies I and II, Demonstration of Form and Color, Part 1, Scene 2)*, 1936. Gelatin silver print, 7 ¾ x 9 ⅞ inches.
bottom Scene from Xanti Schawinsky's *Danse Macabre*, May 14, 1938.

Xanti Schawinsky. *Spectodrama (Black Mountain Stage Studies)*, 1936
Watercolor, pen, and graphite on paper, 21 ½ x 25 ⅜ inches



top: Xanti Schawinsky, *Spectodrama—9 (Folding and Enfolding)*, 1936–37. Photocollage, 15 x 19 ¾ inches.
bottom: Xanti Schawinsky, *Untitled (Stage, 1057)*, c. 1938. Photocollage, 11 x 14 inches.

Lyonel Feininger, *A Group of Houses and Figures*, c. 1949. Paint on wood, dimensions variable.

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN

Large Jar

JENNI SORKIN

A peer of Anni and Josef Albers at the Weimar Bauhaus, Marguerite Wildenhain holds the distinguished position of being the only woman to achieve the Master Potter designation at the Bauhaus. When the Ceramics Workshop was terminated in 1925, Wildenhain went on to a successful dual career, simultaneously teaching and designing for industry until, as a Jew, she was forced to flee, first to the Netherlands and then to the United States.

Arriving in 1940, Wildenhain became the preeminent Bauhaus ceramist in the United States, known for her rigorous pedagogy and intensive commitment to the vessel tradition and its laborious processes. With its tight-fitting lid and handsome textured base, *Large Jar* (c. 1950) is a wheel-thrown vessel decorated in shades of ocher and cream. At the top of the vessel, lip and lid meet, a perfect showing of technique, the seam highlighted by the contrast of color: two light stripes, one circling the entire base of the lid and the other painted below the edge of the slightly flared rim. The neck descends and then dramatically widens at the shoulder, a deep curvature that is slightly squared, ending in a solid base that looms over a nearly hidden foot, the jar's pedestal at the bottom. Particularly striking is the jar's sharp geometric motif, made by incising neat rows of brown rectangles that prove cumulative. The first row of two stacked rectangles gives way to a row of three and, finally, a wide, final row of five. This simple addition follows the contours of the form itself, as the vessel's girth seems to expand readily, an illusion created by the enhanced verticality of the longest row of rectangles.

Wildenhain was dedicated to the autonomy of the craftsperson, believing that the education of craft was in peril; for it was creating a generation of teachers rather than independent potters able and willing to "live from the work of their hands."[1] This utopian sentiment dovetailed with many of the ideals of Black Mountain. Wildenhain, however, taught at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland only long enough to secure a work visa and declined to fill Robert Turner's vacant post at Black Mountain before setting out on her own.[2] She visited Black Mountain College twice: once in 1947, to see her close friend the weaver Trude Guermonprez, who was teaching with Anni Albers, and several years later for the Pottery Seminar, held October 15–29, 1952, where she demonstrated, lectured, and debated with her international colleagues Shōji Hamada, Bernard Leach, and Sōetsu Yanagi.[3] The verbal sparring between Leach and Wildenhain is notorious in ceramics history, and concerns Leach's denouncement of American ceramics as without strong traditions. This culminated in Wildenhain publishing a public rebuke in *Craft Horizons* in 1953, fiercely defending her adopted homeland from a perceived outsider, emphasizing the many strains present in American ceramics, given the nation's multiculturalism.[4]

Marguerite Wildenhain, n.d. Photo by William Watson.

1. Marguerite Wildenhain, letter to Hal Fromhold, March 13, 1962. This letter refers to one of several complaints she sent to the American Craft Council registering her disappointment with the direction of American craft. Marguerite Wildenhain Papers, series 2, correspondence, box 1, folder 5, reels 5045–5048, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.
2. She became synonymous with Pond Farm, a rural pottery workshop she established in Guerneville, California, where she taught a summer workshop for more than thirty years to dedicated students.
3. Trude Guermonprez, interview by Mary Emma Harris, December 8, 1971, Black Mountain College Research Project, spool 83A, page 14, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
4. See Bernard Leach, "American Impressions," *Craft Horizons* 10, no. 4 (Winter 1950): 18–20; and Marguerite Wildenhain's rejoinder, "Potter's Dissent: An Open Letter to Bernard Leach from Marguerite Wildenhain," *Craft Horizons* 13, no. 3 (May–June 1953): 43–44

Marguerite Wildenhain, *Large Jar*, c. 1950. Glazed earthenware, 9 inches x 7 ½ inches base diameter.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG AND MUSICAL INTERPRETATION AT THE BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE SUMMER MUSIC INSTITUTE OF 1944

JONATHAN HIAM

1944 Summer Music Institute faculty. Front row: Frederic Cohen, Elsa Kahl, Marcel Dick. Middle row: Joanna Graudan, Heinrich Jalowetz, Lotte Leonard. Back row: Nikolai Graudan, Rudolf Kolisch, Lorna Freedman Kolisch, Edward Lowinsky, Eduard Steuermann, Ernst Krenek, Trudi Straus, Roger Sessions.

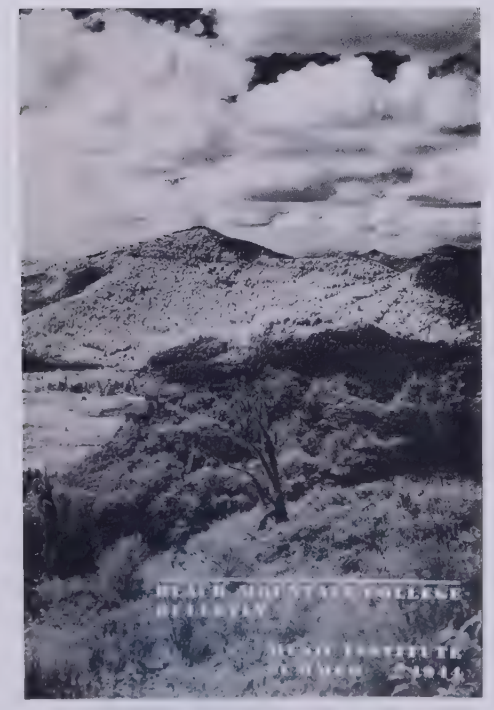
Heinrich Jalowetz leading a choral class, n.d. Photo by Josef Breitenbach.

During the summer of 1944, Black Mountain College hosted a summer music institute devoted to "Musical Interpretation." Organized by Heinrich Jalowetz, Black Mountain's director of music, this particular institute served a double purpose: to disseminate the performance practice of the Second Viennese School and to celebrate the seventieth birthday of its figurehead, Arnold Schoenberg. Jalowetz, who studied with Schoenberg (alongside Anton Webern and Alban Berg), was one of the many members of Schoenberg's circle who found refuge in the United States during World War II. Jalowetz's thematic choice of musical interpretation—a culturally coded musical theory—would provide a framework within which the displaced members of the Schoenberg community could rediscover, reform, and redistribute their specific musical worldview via the institute's ten weeks of seminars, lectures, rehearsals, and performances.[1]

As with the occasions of Schoenberg's fiftieth birthday in 1924 and his sixtieth in 1934, friends and colleagues of the composer similarly gathered for his seventieth, to discuss, perform, and celebrate his music. The American network of Schoenbergian émigrés reunited at Black Mountain—with the Blue Ridge Mountains in place of the Alps—to form the core faculty of 1944's Music Institute. Eduard Steuermann (Schoenberg's pianist of choice, located in New York) and Rudolf Kolisch (violinist and founder of the Kolisch Quartet, touring North America with the formidable Pro Arte Quartet) took on the most active roles, while Ernst Krenek, a major figure in Viennese composition prior to his exile to the US in 1938 delivered a series of lectures, including his influential "Arnold Schoenberg at Seventy." Some of the lesser-known émigrés, such as vocalist Lotte Leonard and violist Marcel Dick, led courses under the rubrics "Interpretation of Vocal Music" and "Interpretation of Instrumental Music."[2]

Musical interpretation for the Second Viennese emphasized the careful study of the musical score to reveal the interrelatedness of the formal elements of the work's structure, which must be performed in a way that would render the composition comprehensible—and therefore meaningful—to the listener. As a performance theory, musical interpretation was the necessary outgrowth of Schoenberg's theory of *Darstellung*, or presentation, in which the articulation of the "small and component parts" of a musical work was necessary if one hoped to perceive its organic whole, its musical nature, and its musical "truth."[3] In 1918, the same theory influenced the formation of the Viennese Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen (The Society for Musical Private Performances), which privileged public rehearsals and the immediate repetition of newly composed works on concert programs. The stated goal of the

1. For more on the Summer Music Institute of 1944, see Jonathan Hiam, "Reconstructing a 'Shaken Culture': The Re-emergence of Schoenberg's Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen at the Black Mountain College Summer Music Institute of 1944," in *Crosscurrents: American and European Music in Interaction, 1900–2000*, ed. Felix Meyer, Carol J. Oja, Wolfgang Rathert, and Anne C. Schreffler (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2014).
2. Heinrich Jalowetz, "Music Institute, Summer 1944" *Black Mountain College Bulletin-Newsletter* 2, no. 5 (February 1944), Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC. Guest members of the faculty included American composers Roger Sessions, Mark Brunswick, Ernst Bacon, and Lionel Nowak. Piano-cello duo Johanna and Nikolai Garudan joined harpsichordist Yella Pessl on the instrumental faculty, while Black Mountain College musicologist Edward Lowinsky led courses in music history and Agnes DeMille and Doris Humphrey guided panel discussions on music in dance and theater. Schoenberg's poor health at the time forced him to decline his invitation to participate in the institute.
3. Schoenberg's idea of *Darstellung* belongs to his larger theories of musical organicism See Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff, "Schoenberg's Philosophy of Composition: 'Thoughts on the Musical Idea and its Presentation,'" in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 146–59.



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, Concert with Heinrich Jalowetz at the piano, c. 1945
Black Mountain College Summer Music Institute brochure, 1944

Musicians practicing on the porch of Lee Hall, n.d. Photo by Helen Post Modley.

Verein—to present "as perfect a presentation of modern music as possible"—required developing a new audience, which could be taught to experience both old and new musical works in a radically different way.[4] This meant an a priori respect for the musical composition, rather than the conductor or soloist, who exploited the music as a vehicle for showmanship and individual expression at the expense of musical truth.

The centerpiece of the institute was Kolisch's course, "Democratic Principles in Ensemble Playing," which met twice per week as an open rehearsal of Schoenberg's String Quartet in D Minor, Op. 7. The public preparation of the Op. 7 Quartet included a musically coordinated projection of the score onto a suspended screen above the players. The projection enabled the audience to follow the members of the quartet as they worked out through conversation and demonstration the structural function of each musical phenomenon, of which each "has its significance and contributes toward the understanding of the [musical] thought." "Concretely speaking," Kolisch noted, "a musical formation has to be made recognizable to be identified as a part of the musical construction, for instance; a theme, a counterpoint, the inversion of a certain motive, etc. Only through a thorough analysis will we be able to determine the function and thus the meaning of a certain musical formation. The acknowledgement of its function will then decide its performance and nothing else."[5] The process by which the ensemble arrived at such determinations, however, was equally important. Kolisch explained to those attending the first workshop that "ensemble playing is not only a *musical* but also a *social* activity. As such, it represents in microcosm of musical performance all the sociological and psychological problems of collective work. Only if these problems are adequately solved is there any hope of reaching . . . the full realization of its musical meaning."[6]

A member of the college's drama faculty, Robert Wunsch, described the first day of Kolisch's workshop as a "privilege" to watch. Among the players, "there were differences of opinion, of course, about how a phrase should be played. There were discussions. There were real explanations. There was hard work. There was concentrated work. It was a real experience for all the young musicians especially, but for layman too. Moreover, it was an adventure in dramatics for me, this seeing of order coming through hard work, out of a beginning familiarity."[7] Wunsch's excitement was magnified by the American composer and guest faculty member Roger Sessions. A few months after its close he wrote that the institute served not only as "a tribute to a truly great musician, but a hopeful sign that art on the highest level may still survive the bewilderments and the terrors of a mighty world crisis, of which so much is still ahead of us, and which contains so many imponderables."[8]

For Sessions, the cultural power of the high-minded seriousness with which the émigrés practiced their art inspired in him a new hope. For Jalowetz and his Schoenbergian colleagues, however, it was the power of music to build the cohesive and flexible social structure necessary for living in a new world from which their hope sprung. Jalowetz's introduction to the institute made this clear,

> How are we to construct our shaken culture? . . . We shall have to find new foundations on stricter principles, now that impressionism, expressionism, and the experiments of yesterday are simply a part of history. Yesterday—to come to our present theme—the interpreter of music was often a wilful, improvising demon for whom the score was the cue for a magnificent exhibitionism. Today, he increasingly recognizes that his first duty is fidelity to the composition while he interprets. He has learned responsibility.[9]

4. See Judith Meibach, "Schoenberg's Society for Musical Private Performances, Vienna, 1918–1922: A Documentary Study," PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1984.
5. Rudolf Kolisch, "Musical Performance: The Realization of Musical Meaning," Kolisch Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
6. Rudolf Kolisch, "Democratic Principles of Ensemble Playing," Kolisch Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
7. W. R. Wunsch, letter to John Evarts, July 8, 1944, Black Mountain College Papers, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
8. Roger Sessions, "Schoenberg in the United States," *Tempo* 9 (December, 1944): 160–65, repr. in *Schoenberg and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999), 336.
9. Jalowetz, "Music Institute."

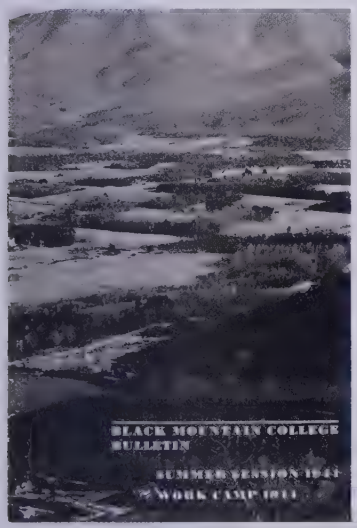
BUILDING AUTONOMY, CREATING COMMUNITY: THE FARM AND WORK PROGRAM AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

DAVID SILVER

Students with barn and grain silo in the background, n.d. Photo by Josef Breitenbach.
Students preparing ground for the construction of the Studies Building, n.d.

top: Roscoe Penley, Black Mountain College's first farmer, n.d.
bottom: Robert Rauschenberg (in white sweater) preparing timber at Black Mountain College, n.d.

Black Mountain College Bulletin, summer 1944.



In September 1933, Black Mountain College opened with ten faculty and nineteen students in the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA. The students, faculty, and faculty families lived together in Lee Hall. They ate meals together and, after dinner on Saturdays, danced together. Perhaps most important, they worked together. From the start, Black Mountain students and faculty took on small, individual duties like cleaning one's room and study, as well as larger, more collective tasks like washing dishes and gathering firewood for the huge Lee Hall fireplace. In November 1933, students Norman Weston, Anne Chapin, and David Bailey introduced an idea at the community meeting: they wanted to start a farm to help save money and build community. After a long conversation, the proposal passed unanimously.

The farm introduced to the college a more diverse array of chores that required consistent attention and collective action. "The work program contributed to the sense of community," recalled Mary Brett Daniels, a Black Mountain student during its early years. "Not a token work at all, but real and necessary work that everyone shared, that had to be done."[1] And the farm served as a place of reflection away from the classroom. As Chapin recalled, "There was the daily work on the farm for a great many of us . . . in winter, pruning apple trees . . . in fall and spring, working in the garden. . . . And we all came in for tea around four, just, oh, bursting with good feeling and good health and having been doing something different from the tremendous amount of intellection and *talk* that went on and on and on."[2]

In addition to farm tasks, there were regular campus responsibilities like servicing the heating and plumbing systems (supervised by Bascomb Allen), maintaining roads and pathways (led by Josef Albers), and helping in the kitchen (expertly guided by cooks Jack and Rubye Lipsey). From one o'clock to four o'clock, students and faculty worked—digging rows, harvesting corn, fixing showers, and tending roads. By 1936, this schedule of physical labor at the college was formalized as the work program. It is doubtful that the college would have made it through the long, lean years of the 1930s without the work program. But, further, the program thrived because it fostered community and flattened hierarchies, especially between faculty and students. As student Doughten Cramer recalled, "Intellectually, this rubbing elbows with professors on a basis of equality outside the classroom was very important."[3]

When the college moved in 1937 to a large property on Lake Eden—which included fourteen buildings, among them two large guest lodges, a dining room and kitchen, various cottages, and a bug-ridden farmhouse, situated on 725 acres of land—the work program necessarily changed. As a campus, the new location had two problems: it lacked both insulation and space for individual studies. For the next four years, Black Mountain College functioned as a mobile campus—renting, living, and holding classes at Blue Ridge and then, in the afternoon, loading up the farm truck and driving to Lake Eden to insulate existing buildings and

1. Mary Brett Daniels, "The Work Program," in *The Black Mountain College Project: Student Experience in Experimental Education in the Early Years (1933–43)*, ed. Robert Sunley, at http://blackmountaincollegeproject.org/Features/SUNLEY/SUNLEYpartII/OutsidetheClassroomWORK.htm.
2. Anne Howard Chapin, interview by Mary Emma Harris, Birmingham, MI, October 26, 1971, 5–6, Black Mountain College Research Project, State Archives of North Carolina, Western Regional Archives, Asheville, NC.
3. Doughten Cramer, "I Went to Black Mountain College," undated, 9, Black Mountain College Research Project, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.

Students digging drainage ditch for Studies Building, n.d.

construct new ones. Each summer from 1938 to 1940, the college ran the Lake Eden Inn, which turned a small profit; in the summer of 1940, it earned the college $866.

The purchase of Lake Eden held the potential for the operation of a real farm. In 1938, the college hired Roscoe Penley to be Black Mountain's first farmer. Under Penley's leadership and with mathematics professor Theodore Dreier's unwavering energy and enthusiasm, the farm began to take shape, first with the planting of acres of vegetables, then the creation of tens of acres of pasture, and finally the addition of livestock, including a dairy herd and hogs. Although the college community would not live at Lake Eden until 1941, they ate from its bounty as early as 1938.

In fall 1940, construction of the Studies Building began, supervised by A. Lawrence Kocher, visiting professor of architecture, and Charles Godfrey, a local builder. Influenced by the volunteer work camps that the American Friends Service Committee conducted, the college began a summer work camp for about two dozen students, who were primarily committed to erecting the Studies Building. The building's construction was an all-time highlight of communality at Black Mountain. All students, faculty, and faculty spouses were involved in the daily work, and countless memoirs recall this era as exciting and vital. Gisela Kronenberg Herwitz, a student from 1940 to 1943, recalled, "I even enjoyed digging the ditches that became the foundations for the Study Building at Lake Eden. . . . I learned to put in subflooring, to drive a nail straight, and to do some masonry work with field stones on the Study Building."[4] Robert Bliss, a student from 1939 to 1942 and eventual manager of the woodworking shop, remembered, "We gathered river boulders and mountain stone, cut trees for pilings, dug foundation trenches, poured concrete, and set masonry. Carpentry, plumbing, wiring, laying oak flooring, and painting completed the work. Everyone took part and all could take pride in what a small group could accomplish given the desire and obvious need."[5] In fall 1941, the college fully moved to the Lake Eden campus.

Theodore Dreier in his study, n.d. Photo by Tom Leonard

While Kocher deserves much credit for Black Mountain's building program, so does Molly Gregory. In fall 1941, she was hired as an apprentice teacher of plastics, and a year later she was reassigned as instructor of crafts. Finally, in 1943, the college reappointed her instructor of woodworking, a title she would hold until her departure in 1947. When Gregory first arrived, the building program increased dramatically, especially on the farm. From the summer of 1941 to the spring of 1942, the college community constructed a large barn, designed by Kocher and Godfrey, and through the summer and fall of 1942, they completed a milk house and two corn silos. During the following two years, often through the summer work programs and nearly always under Gregory's supervision, the college designed and built a calf barn, a beef-cattle shed, brooder and laying houses, cold frames, and a dual-use equipment shed and corn crib (made entirely with campus lumber).

Molly Gregory teaching a woodworking class, n.d. Photo by Josef Breitenbach.

Students and staff building the large barn at Lake Eden, 1941–42.

Gregory's contributions stretched beyond her position as faculty member. When Bliss, along with most male students and some male faculty, joined the war in 1942, Gregory took over the woodshop. Under her, the woodshop became the heart of the building program, churning out benches and tables for the growing Lake Eden campus. Students, having just received their own workrooms in the Studies Building, needed to furnish them, so they went to the woodshop to learn how to make chairs and desks and, sometimes, chests of drawers. Gregory made the large table in the classroom in the Studies Building and the benches for the Quiet House. In addition to teaching and running the woodshop, Gregory ran the farm, did its bookkeeping, and directed multiple summer work camps between 1945 and 1946. During the summer of 1947, she "raised the roof" of the farmhouse to accommodate two new farm families, eventually leaving the college a few weeks later.

Fittingly, it took two farming couples to replace her. By fall 1947, the "new regime" arrived: Clifford and Shirley Moles and Raymond and Dorothy Trayer, who had worked as the college secretary and then registrar in 1942–43. Influenced by J. I. Rodale and his *Organic Farming and Gardening* magazine (started in 1942), Moles and Trayer focused on improving the Lake Eden soil and clearing trees for more pasture. They also tried to bridge the gap between work and education by offering the courses Introduction to Agriculture and Soil and Steel.

Moles and Trayer benefitted greatly by working with some exceptional students. Ruth Asawa grew up truck farming until she was interned as a Japanese American in 1942. At Black Mountain, Asawa experimented with and quickly mastered transforming campus milk into buttermilk, a favorite, incidentally, of Albers. A Hawaii native, Isaac Nakata also grew up farming. Nakata brought much experience to the farm, documented beautifully in his essay "In That Time Long Ago."[6] William Treichler arrived having grown up on an organic, self-sufficient farm in Iowa. And then there was Robert Rauschenberg who took on at least two work program chores: preparing timber and collecting garbage.

And, yet, all was not well with the work program in the mid- to late 1940s. This was the era of the Summer Institutes. Inspiring and often history making, the Summer Institutes contributed little to Black Mountain's work program. Because so many of the summer instructors were visitors, they were not schooled in the community spirit of the campus. Increasingly, most of the work was done by students—and not faculty.

In the 1950s, the work program collapsed. Work still happened: From 1952 to 1954, Doyle and Clara Jones ran the farm and brought to market a beef herd. In 1952, Fielding Dawson, Don Page, and Trueman MacHenry built a tobacco barn out of campus oak. But for the most part, instead of working with their resources, the college began to sell them off. In late 1949, it sold seventy acres of gravel land for thirty thousand dollars to pay off debt accrued from the previous year. Between 1950 and 1952, the college sold multiple parcels of land for timbering. In 1954, it sold the lower campus, including the dining hall, kitchen, Studies Building, and lake. In summer 1956, the college sold the farm and by the fall began the process of closing.

4. Gisela Kronenberg Herwitz, "The Work Program," in *The Black Mountain College Project*.
5. Robert Bliss, interview by Mary Emma Harris, Salt Lake City, UT, November 22, 1971, Black Mountain College Research Project, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
6. I. S. Nakata, "In That Time Long Ago," in *Black Mountain College: Sprouted Seeds, An Anthology of Personal Accounts*, ed. Mervin Lane (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1990), 83–89

Mim Sihvonen, *Stool*, 1947. Maple, 30 x 12 x 12 inches.

top James Prestini, *Bowl*, c. 1943. Mexican mahogany, 5 ¾ inches x 16 ⅛ inches diameter.
bottom James Prestini, *Bowl (no. 265)*, c. 1945. Honduran mahogany, 1 inch x 5 ¾ inches diameter.

following Mim Sihvonen, *Plates*, 1947–48. Wood, ½ x 5 ½ x 5 ½ inches, 1 x 9 x 9 inches, and 1 x 11 x 11 inches.

CONVERTING
THE IMPOSSIBLE
into the actual
HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN AMERICAN TRADITION

people said...

in 1933, that it was impossible to found a new college, to undertake a pioneer educational adventure, at the bottom of the depression

— without funds in sight
— without more than thirty teachers and students
— without a campus

for years, that it was impossible to operate a college controlled by faculty and students

— where close community life is practicable and beneficial
— where personal merit determines standing
— where freedom is a means to responsibility

in 1940, that it was impossible to build a modern, college plant using chiefly student and faculty labor

— with no money in sight
— with no technical experience
— with the pressure of having to move within a year

people say...

in 1941, that American education must adapt itself to a world in crisis

— by making itself as nearly as possible self-supporting
— by successfully combining practical and theoretical education
— by preparing resourceful citizens with democratic conviction in their bones

the growth of an idea...

has been continuous at Black Mountain College for eight years. A simple, college plant is necessary to harbor that idea.

Where there was only a hillside in September, 1940, there is now a 75-room building, three-quarters completed. Some 16,000 man-hours of student and faculty labor, and some $19,000 in gifts, have brought it to this point. But it must be finished and the old buildings remodelled.

NEEDED AT ONCE: $15,000

at stake: the growth of an idea

To an incredible extent imagination and determination can take the place of money. But they cannot produce cement and steel and glass and plywood.

The $15,000 needed to prepare adequate quarters for next year — to complete the main wing of the new building and remodel the old buildings — is a trifle compared with the sums colleges constantly request. And just for that reason it is harder to get.

People believe that so little is easy to get, that someone else will give it, that a few dollars will not help.

People fear that their contributions will be lost; and they wonder how money can be spent these days on anything except defense.

The College believes that $15,000 will be raised only if many people give small sums and if some people give larger ones. Every dollar will help substantially; everyone interested in the College can afford at least that amount.

If the College has existed eight years as a tenant, it can presumably exist many more years than that when established on its own property. Operating expenses will be decreased through the immediate saving of rent and through farming. There will no longer be the impermanence of renting which has kept away students, recognition, and support. A vicious circle will have been broken.

If a short-range view is taken, everything must go to defense. But in defending America should we not also defend American values and be prepared for the world of the future?

AN EXPRESSION OF THANKS

to all those friends of Black Mountain College whose generous support in the past has enabled an idea to grow and to become a force in American education.

an appeal at a critical moment

Black Mountain College has often confronted the impossible, and, with the indispensable aid of its friends, has always converted the impossible into the actual.

Right now an impossibility must be overcome.
The College is moving to its permanent home. Much work remains to be done to prepare adequate housing facilities for next year. This work can be done over the summer, with the aid of the Work Camp and with some hired labor.

But money is imperatively needed for materials.
Educationally the College is stronger and more significant than ever before. The faculty and students intend to go on, whatever the circumstances. They fear, however, that too primitive and crowded conditions will jeopardize — and possibly obliterate — the values that eight years of unremitting effort have created.

They have done everything they can. And they believe in the adage about *those who help themselves.*

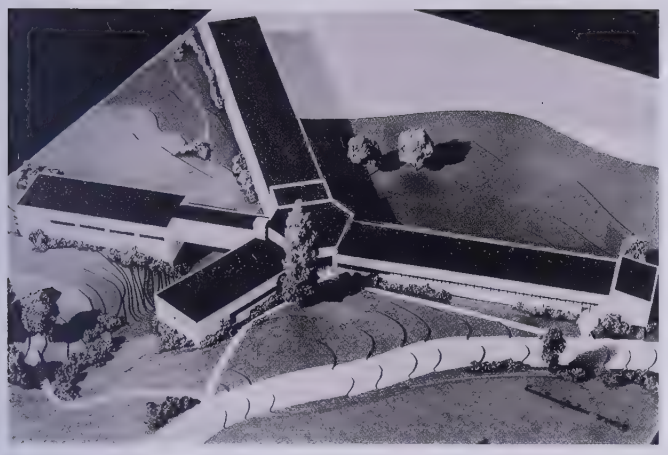
They appeal to you to help convert a seeming impossibility into an actuality.

above Black Mountain College brochure, c. 1941.
opposite Student Jane Robinson prepares cement for the construction of the Studies Building, n.d.

THE DESIGN-BUILD PROGRAM AT LAKE EDEN

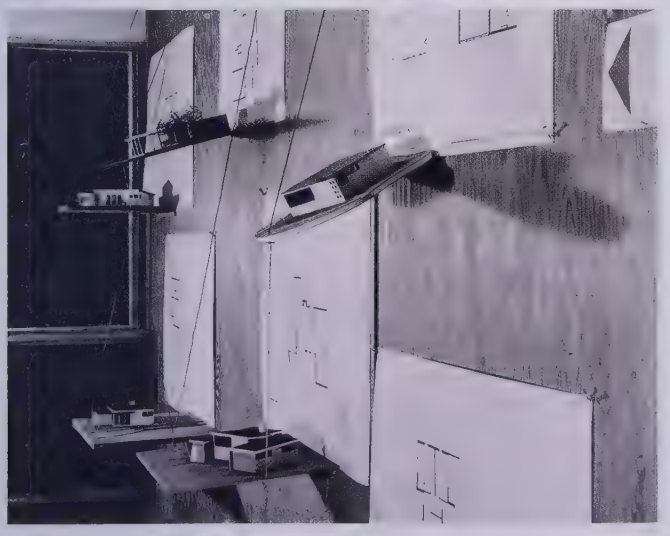
LAUREN BELLARD

[illegible]: Students working on the construction of the Studies Building, c. 1940–41.
[illegible]e The Studies Building under construction, n.d.



Model of Studies Building with four wings for dormitory, library, administration, and classrooms, n.d.

top: Students and faculty constructing the pylons and foundation of the Studies Building, n.d.
bottom: Exhibition of models for low-cost home architecture, 1941. Photo by Claude Stoller.



Black Mountain College's resolve to move from the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA to a rustic resort on Lake Eden, like many of the fledgling school's decisions, was in part motivated by external conditions and in part based on spirited discussions among faculty and students. As soon as Lake Eden Inn's nearly seven hundred acres of land and sixteen buildings were purchased in 1937, the college set its sights on constructing a new campus to be built in a Bauhaus-inspired modernist style that would visually showcase the school's progressive spirit. Noting that the existing buildings would not be sufficient for student lodging and college activities, the 1937–38 college catalogue announced that, "a comprehensive building program is being worked out, and meanwhile more immediate improvements such as landscaping are actually in progress."[1] These comprehensive plans were hazy until 1939, when Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer unveiled a plan for the Studies Building. In the meantime, work began on the new campus. The establishment of a farm at Lake Eden marked the beginning of a robust manual-labor program that included the college's own architectural construction and, eventually, mica mining, which supported the war effort.[2] Students rode in the back of a pickup truck from Robert E. Lee Hall to Lake Eden to tend the farm, chop wood, and do roadwork and landscaping projects.

When, in 1940, it became evident that the college's meager finances could not offset the fifty-thousand-dollar Gropius and Breuer modernist makeover of the campus, architect A. Lawrence Kocher was enlisted to find a way to balance their grandiose dreams with day-to-day realities. Prior to his arrival at Black Mountain, Kocher had spent his career proselytizing for the "new" through his editorship of *Architectural Record* in the 1920s, and he had a unique impact on the campus landscape and architectural curriculum. During his academic career, Kocher studied vernacular residential architecture in the United States and was an early advocate of its preservation, hence none of the original sixteen buildings on the Lake Eden property were torn down but instead were winterized and assigned new uses. Kocher taught hands-on construction and architectural history and championed modern technology. In the 1940–41 academic year, Kocher taught Contemporary Architecture, described in the course catalogue as "an analysis of aesthetic and practical requirements of planning. The house unit is related to the general organization of the community or neighborhood. In the advanced course individual projects are developed as plan, working drawings, and models. There is an emphasis on tactile acquaintance with materials and their application to building structure, finishes, and furniture."[3] Courses offered the following year were Architectural Elements, Intermediate Design, Advanced Design, Mechanics, Structural Design 1 and 2, History of Architecture, and Field Work.

Though the college could not afford the Gropius-Breuer design, Kocher, whose own plan for the Studies Building was ultimately accepted in 1940, continued to

1. Black Mountain College catalogue, 1937–38, series 1, Black Mountain College Publications (1933–57), Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center Collection, Digital Collection, D. H. Ramsey Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville; http://toto.lib.unca.edu.

2. Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 66.

3. Black Mountain College catalogue, 1940–41, series 1, Black Mountain Publications (1933–1957), Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center Collection, Digital Collection, D. H. Ramsey Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville; http://toto.lib.unca.edu.

WHAT YOUR DOLLAR WILL BUY

Unlike other colleges we derive no income either from taxes or endowment. The College has managed to exist and grow on fairly modest student fees and on gifts from its friends. It has a faculty which is willing to make sacrifices in order to teach here. Founded in the depth of the depression—1933—the College has had many obstacles to overcome.

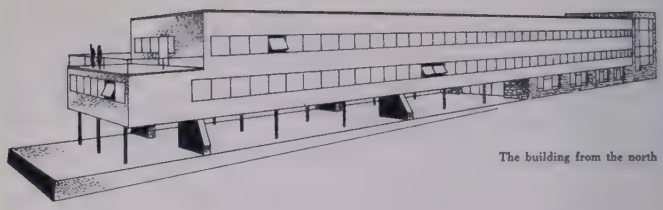
In order to meet our present problem—preparing a permanent location for the College—we have cleared land, diverted a stream, cut away half a hill-side; we have cut the timber for piles, blasted and hauled rocks for walls, mixed and poured concrete; we have learned to build stone walls and lay flooring.

Yet the importance of actual building is but a part of our whole educational program. In order to continue that program, we need your help.

The Students

Please make checks payable to Black Mountain College

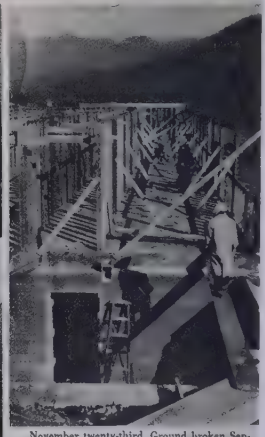
$2.50	1 yard stonework
$5.00	2 windows
$7.00	1 door
$10.00	1 8' x 10' unit flooring
$25.00	1 fireplace
$50.00	1 flight stairs
$100.00	1 stairtower window



The building from the north

On these pages appear pictures of the present state of the large building on which we at Black Mountain College have been working since September. No one who has not worked on it will realize fully our excitement in seeing these pictures and in comparing them to our memory of the unbroken site. We want to convey this excitement to you, and to make clear the importance of the project, not only to us, the students of the College, but also to you outside the College.

(continued on page 5)



November twenty-third. Ground broken September twelfth; schedule 'roof by Christmas'.

We need funds in order to proceed.

We realize that requests for funds are almost overwhelming in these days of war and preparations for defense. But the disheartening aspects of world affairs would be unbearable to all of us if we did not forsee the possibility of peace and security sometime in the future. At the same time that we plan for defense we must plan for peace. At the same time that we plan for the present we must plan for the future.

To live in this future will require increased intellectual understanding and civic responsibility as well as hard practicality. You who are familiar with our aims and our practices will see how the building program has particular value in fitting us for this exacting democracy. But, however well-educated we as individuals may become, the work of the College is obviously much more widely effective. By influencing the educational trend of the nation it is one of the many positive directive forces in the country today. We believe that to give financial support to Black Mountain College is as important as to support the many causes that seem to be more immediately pressing.

Our needs are modest in comparison with those of most colleges. We live simply and do as much of our own work as we efficiently can In consequence we need ask for money for essentials only.

Since the expiration of our lease makes it necessary for us to move to our own property by next year, the most pressing need is to finish the one new building we have started and to make the old buildings habitable.

We need,

in order to continue work the next semester:

for completing the building (if we were not doing almost all the work ourselves this building alone would have cost a total of about $53,000)	$19,000
for repairing and insulating the old buildings	$ 9,000
for the second wing of the new building	$12,000

Also necessary to house the College next year:

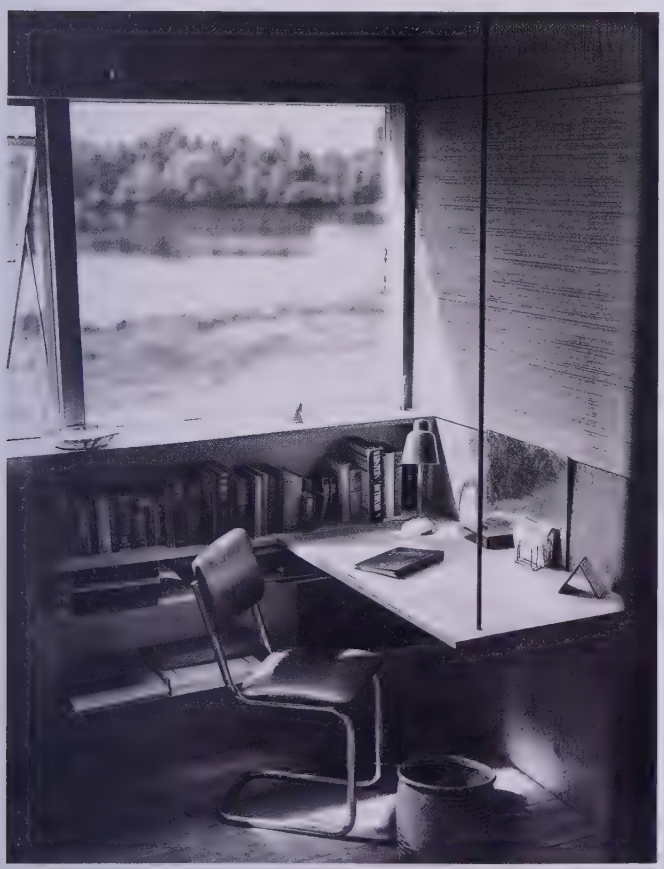
for six faculty cottages	$15,000
for furnishings	$ 2,000
for quarters for the colored help	$ 3,000
for the mortgage	$12,000

Photographs and drawings by students of the College

Jean Charlot's mural *Inspiration* on the pylons of the Studies Building, 1944.

Jean Charlot's mural *Knowledge* on the pylons of the Studies Building, 1944.

top: A. Lawrence Kocher and students with model of the Studies Building, 1940.
bottom: Student study designed by A. Lawrence Kocher, chair by Marcel Breuer, n.d.



consult closely with Gropius on revising the designs. In addition to providing both lodging and classroom space for students, the Studies Building, according to student-turned-architecture instructor Paul Beidler, had to "give visual evidence of the exploring spirit which must prevail if Black Mountain is to continue to pioneer toward a vital education for today."[4] Only one wing of the planned four was ever constructed: a streamlined, two-hundred-foot-long building with a foundation of local stone rubble, a wood frame, and a facing of transite, a then cutting-edge asbestos-filled material. A curious International Style building amid a rural southern landscape, the structure became an icon of Black Mountain College.

Black Mountain always produced promotional pamphlets, catalogues, and newsletters, and with the construction of the Studies Building these publications were produced with renewed purpose. The "Building Project" and "Work Camp" publications feature young people building in a time of war: two young men breaking stones; a young woman hammering, a real-life Rosie the Riveter. The symbolism of "architecture for democracy" is undeniable: one pamphlet, in appealing to patriotic sentiments, reads, "You, the generation now in the schools of our country, are asked by history to be heroic and wise at an age when you would ordinarily still be preparing for a comfortable existence. You will have to win a war and you will have to create the world order of the future. It is no light task: there is no easy answer. Yet the problem of deciding is inescapably yours."[5] Gropius, who remained a sort of spiritual guide, as well as a long-distance collaborator and adviser, sent his Harvard graduate students to gain practical building experience at Black Mountain during the summer sessions.

The mid- to late 1940s saw an explosion of student architectural creativity and production. Claude Stoller, who later became a successful professional architect, worked as the job captain for the Jalowetz House (named for resident

4. Paul Beidler, quoted in Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 56.
5. Black Mountain College brochure, 1941–42, Horace McGuire Wood Papers, 1933–72, box 2 folder 10, PC 1517, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.

Completed Studies Building, n.d

Jalowetz House, designed by A. Lawrence Kocher in 1941. Photo by Claude Stoller.

music teacher Heinrich Jalowetz) under Kocher's direction. The house incorporated conventional and prefabricated elements and was an experiment in building for acoustics, with its use of perforated-plywood wall panels and vermiculite ceiling plaster that evidently improved the sound of Jalowetz's piano practice. Today the slightly remodeled Jalowetz House is a private residence, a testament to its strength and adaptability.

Student Alex Reed, who subsequently studied architecture at the graduate level at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, designed the Quiet House. Built in 1942 from stone gathered on campus, it integrated seamlessly with the original rustic cabins and lodges. The Quiet House functioned as a sacred space and memorial to Mark Dreier, the young son of Theodore and Barbara Dreier who tragically died on campus the year before, and was furnished with wood benches designed by Reed and woodworking instructor Molly Gregory. Robert Rauschenberg lovingly documented the light and shadows of the building's private, contemplative interior in an early photograph.

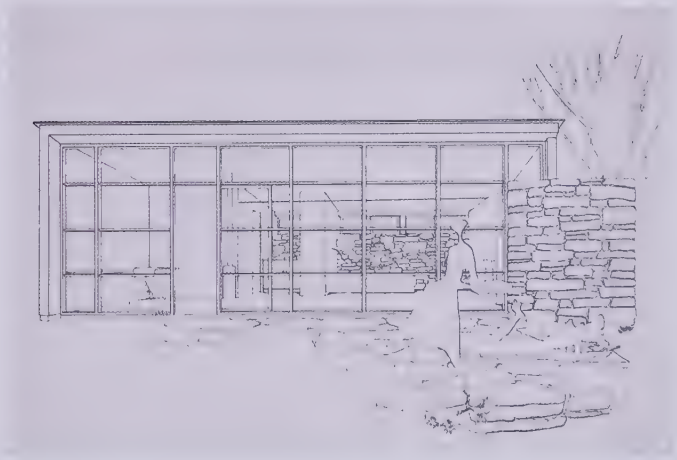
Paul Beidler was appointed as both an instructor in architecture and a consulting architect in February 1945. He designed the Music Cubicle, built that summer from glass, concrete, and wood with two slanted glass walls for excellent acoustics. Plans to scatter similar practice/study cubicles all over campus were abandoned when Beidler departed to begin his own architectural practice after the summer of 1945. The Music Cubicle resonated with the design press, including *California Arts and Architecture*, an influential modernist magazine that specialized in West Coast production, which featured it in April 1949 in the photo essay "Minimum House: A Student Project." Minimum House, built in 1949, also used glass walls. Truly sculptural, the tall glass walls in Music Cubicle and Minimum House reflected the surrounding woods so that they assimilated more intimately into the natural environment than did the Studies Building built earlier that decade.

Experimentation, experience, and the ephemeral were all themes important to the pedagogical foundation of Black Mountain College. R. Buckminster Fuller, hired in the summers of 1948 and 1949, continued this legacy of experimentation and contributed to the modernist architectural campaign at the college. During the summer of 1948, he attempted to erect his first geodesic dome, a humbling endeavor with mixed results. Nonetheless, Fuller's building captivated his students, who enthusiastically and successfully erected the dome alongside him the following year.

The enthusiasm for new construction eventually resulted in the construction of the pot shop, farm buildings, science building/photography darkroom, woodshop/printshop, and the New Cottage; GIs returning from World War II built a number of Federal Housing Administration–funded barrack-like structures. Though many of the structures have since been destroyed by fire or intentionally demolished, the built environment at Lake Eden was central to the educational and community experience at Black Mountain College.

top Quiet House (memorial to Mark Dreier), designed and built by Alex Reed and Molly Gregory in 1942.
right Robert Rauschenberg, *Quiet House—Black Mountain*, 1949/1990. Gelatin silver print, sheet size 20 x 16 inches.

Music Cubicle designed by Paul Beidler, constructed by students, summer 1945



top. **Minimum House, designed and constructed by students, 1947–48. Photo by Jerrold Levy.**
middle, left **William Albert Lanier, *Plan for Minimum House, Black Mountain College*, 1947. Ink on paper, 13 ½ x 18 ½ inches.**
middle, right **William Albert Lanier, *Front Elevation for Minimum House, Black Mountain College*, 1947. Ink on paper, 11 x 17 ¼ inches.**
bottom **William Albert Lanier, *Rear Elevation, Minimum House, Black Mountain College*, 1947. Ink on paper, 11 x 16 inches.**

A. LAWRENCE KOCHER

Stool and Side Table

RUTH ERICKSON

A. Lawrence Kocher's *Stool* and *Side Table* (both 1942) embody many of the design tenets that guided his architectural practice and teaching. Uncomplicated and clean, the modest stool and side table were built in maple using basic cross structures. For both pieces of furniture, two intersecting boards establish a stable base on which Kocher has placed a third board for the circular seat and the rectangular table surface. Each piece is a slight variation on a standard, utilitarian form, and they reflect Kocher's commitment to imbuing modernist structures with warmth, domesticity, and practicality. The stool and side table beckon to be used, which is exactly what Kocher had in mind when he constructed them at the college in 1942.

Woodworking was prevalent at Black Mountain from the college's first years, owing in part to the need for suitable furniture and equipment. In the late 1930s, Anni Albers engaged a local craftsperson to construct looms so that she could set up a weaving shop, and Josef Albers designed multiple pieces of furniture, including nesting tables, a wingback chair based on a design by Clara Porset, and a desk, which became the standard issue for students' studies.[1] It was not until 1941—and the hiring of Molly Gregory as an apprentice-teacher—that the college set up its woodworking workshop, where Kocher likely built his stool and table, with expert guidance from Gregory.[2]

When Kocher joined the faculty at Black Mountain College in 1940, he was already a seasoned teacher, academic, and architect. He formed the School of Architecture at Pennsylvania State College, served for ten years as a managing editor of *Architectural Record*, and gained national attention for his design of small, affordable houses constructed of basic materials.[3] Committed to experiential education, Kocher featured Black Mountain College as one of ten institutions pioneering new approaches to teaching and design in the September 1936 issue of *Architectural Record*.[4]

Kocher was also a key purveyor of Bauhaus ideas in the United States; in the late 1930s, he wrote to Theodore Dreier to suggest that Black Mountain College hire Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, recent German émigrés who were teaching architecture at Harvard University, to design structures for its new Lake Eden campus.[5] When the Gropius-Breuer plans proved too complex and costly, especially given the wartime economy, the college turned to Kocher, inviting him to design simpler buildings that could be constructed by faculty and students. His plan for a single structure with four wings radiating from a central gathering hall offered a unified site for most campus activities. In the fall of 1940, Kocher relocated to Black Mountain to oversee construction of the first wing (the only one to be constructed), a monumental undertaking given the limited resources and untrained labor pool. Within a year, students moved into the two-hundred-foot-long Studies Building, which remains in place today, to complete their individual work spaces.[6]

During his three years as professor of architecture at Black Mountain, Kocher pioneered an early example of a design-build program, involving students in the total architectural process from paper to pilings.[7] Through his courses and work, Kocher endeavored to consider architectural solutions to social issues, especially using novel materials and modular design to create housing for low- and middle-class families.[8] Writing to Theodore Dreier about his architectural course ideas, Kocher stated, "Design should relate to reality; the reality of the life for today; the houses for improved living, improved community planning; and a richer life which presupposes the philosophy of surroundings that are attractive, sanitary and efficient."[9] Kocher's stool and side table represent one of his many attempts to enrich the everyday living environment through astute, low-cost design.

A. Lawrence Kocher with architecture students, c. 1941–42.

1. Edward DuPuy, a local carpenter and photographer, worked with Josef Albers on fabricating furniture and frames. See Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 24.
2. For more on craft at Black Mountain College, see Katie Lee Koven, *Shaping Craft and Design* (Asheville, NC: Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 2013).
3. For a general overview of Kocher, see Lawrence Wodehouse, "Kocher at Black Mountain," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 41, no. 4 (December 1982): 328–32.
4. The other schools were University of Cincinnati, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Michigan, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Taliesan, University of Minnesota, Harvard University, Beaux Arts Institute of Design, and New York University. Highlighting the college's group living and studying, Kocher focused on "the forceful influence of Josef Albers, trained in architecture and a prime inspiration in the guidance of students," presenting a series of quotations from Albers's essay "Art as Experience," published in the October 1935 issue of *Progressive Education*. Lawrence Kocher, "Education of the Architect," *Architectural Record* 80, no. 3 (September 1936): 212.
5. See the correspondence from A. Lawrence Kocher to Theodore Dreier, September 24, 1937, Theodore Dreier and Barbara Loines Dreier Papers, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC. Quoted in Mary Emma Harris, "Studies Building," Black Mountain College Project website, http://www.blackmountaincollegeproject.org/ARCHITECTURE/CAMPUSES/LAKE%20EDEN/NEW%20BUILDINGS/24%20A%20STUDIES%20BUILDING%20TEXT.htm, accessed October 2014.
6. See Lauren Bellard, "The Design-Build Program at Lake Eden," in this volume, 132–38, as well as Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 54–64.
7. Two of Kocher's students, Robert Bliss and Claude Stoller, went on to become professional architects, and others undertook additional building projects on campus, such as Alex Reed's Quiet House, built in memory of Theodore and Barbara Dreier's son Mark.
8. On the recent fate of Kocher's iconic early Aluminaire House, see Bianca Barragan, "Palm Springs Wants to Adopt NY's All-Metal Modernist House," September 22, 2014, http://la.curbed.com/archives/2014/09/palm_springs_wants_to_adopt_nycs_allmetal_modernist_house.php, accessed October 2014.
9. A. Lawrence Kocher to Theodore Dreier, July 17, 1940, Theodore Dreier Papers, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC. Quoted in Mary Emma Harris, "Exhibition of Small House Design Class," Black Mountain College Project, http://www.blackmountaincollegeproject.org/ARCHITECTURE/CURRICULUM/SMALL%20HOUSE%20EXHIBITION.htm, accessed October 2014.

A. Lawrence Kocher, *Stool* and *Side Table*, 1942. Wood; stool: 16 ⅛ x 11 ⅝ inches; table: 21 x 23 ½ inches.

JOSEF AND ANNI ALBERS: MEXICO AND MODERNITY

BRENDA DANILOWITZ

Josef Albers, *Pyramid of Tenajuca*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 6 7/8 x 9 7/8 inches.
Josef Albers, *Untitled (Grand Pyramid at Tenayuca)*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 7 x 9 7/8 inches.

Modernist abstraction assigned high aesthetic and moral value to art from non-Western societies and earlier civilizations. Paul Klee and Vassily Kandinsky brought these values to the Bauhaus, where, in the early 1920s as a young neophyte student in the Weaving Workshop, Anni Albers aligned them with the pre-Columbian Andean textile collections familiar to her from Berlin's ethnographic museum and her reading of Wilhelm Worringer's influential text *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908). These principles and models quickly came to inform her work and to drive her determination to make abstract structure the dominant principle of her textiles. They permeate Albers's writings as well. In her seminal 1965 book, *On Weaving*, she described pictorial motifs in textiles as "regressive," arguing that "much of the potency of textile art has been lost during centuries of efforts to produce woven versions of paintings, often based on cartoons of the great painters of the past."[1] These ideas drew Anni and Josef Albers to Mexico soon after their arrival in the United States in late fall 1933.

Their first visit to Mexico was in December 1935, in the company of their new (and eventually lifelong) friends Theodore and Barbara Dreier. Almost immediately the Alberses found heady visual and intellectual inspiration in Mexican art and architecture, which blurred the hierarchical divisions of Western traditions. A free flow of invention overtook distinctions between old and new, center and periphery, high and low, and abstraction, realism, and Surrealism. Mexico was "a country for art like no other," Anni Albers wrote in 1936 to Vassily and Nina Kandinsky in Paris, "temples, ancient sculpture, the whole country full of it . . . and folk art, still very much alive and good."[2] Over the next three decades and fourteen return visits, Anni and Josef formed friendships with many artists, designers, architects, collectors, and dealers in Mexico, including Inés Amor, Luis Barragán, Jorge Juan Crespo de la Serna, Diego Rivera, Ricardo Legorreta, Carlos Mérida, Juan O'Gorman, José Clemente Orozco, Clara Porset, and Xavier Guerrero, as well as such European and American émigrés as Max Cetto, Rene D'Harnoncourt, Hannes Meyer, Mathias Goeritz, John Graham, Michael Van Beuren, and Klaus Grabe (the latter two former Bauhaus students).

Josef and Anni visited Diego Rivera in his new cubic flat-roofed house in San Angel, its exterior painted the bright blue of the Mexican skies. The house, inspired by Le Corbusier, contained Rivera's vast collection of pre-Columbian objects and Mexican folk art, and the larger-than-life Mexican artist's renowned and striking Social Realist murals in Mexico City's public buildings epitomized the eclecticism of Mexican modernism. It was a mix often completed by a Baroque backdrop in the form of an ornate Colonial cathedral.

The Alberses' visits to Mexico in the 1930s (four trips between 1935 and 1939) coincided with the country's renewed enthusiasm for archaeological exploration after several years of political turmoil. Exploring the excavations that were then spreading throughout the countryside, Anni felt that she was stepping back in time and had intuitively found the source of a powerful creative energy. Soon the couple was traveling widely, collecting tiny clay figurines and fragments. "We ventured into regions not yet then included in the regular tourist itinerary. . . . We could not believe that here in our hands were century-old pre-Columbian pieces," Anni wrote. "Yes, here was country whose earth still yielded such art."[3] Josef took hundreds of photographs that he later sorted and arranged into a large body of photocollages, composed mostly of tiny contact prints.

The effect on both of their work was immediate. "It's strange that of all things, sculpture and pottery give me ideas for weaving. Especially clay as material," Anni wrote to Theodore Dreier in 1936.[4] That year she completed a large-scale wall hanging. Titled *Monte Albán*, it retained the underlying strict geometry of the grid, the muted color, and the scale that characterized the wall hangings she designed at the Bauhaus. Overlaying that geometry was a new element, a wandering line that traced, in a floating weft, the outline of the Zapotec architectures of the eponymous site. It was as if, under the liberating power of this Mexican inspiration, Anni had united two aspects of Bauhaus orthodoxy: the tyrannical grid and Paul Klee's legendary advice to his students to "take a line for a walk."

Josef was pleased and surprised to be welcomed in Mexico City as "the father of abstraction" in 1936.[5] Since he deplored the mixing of art and politics, he had less tolerance than Anni for Diego Rivera's murals. He identified instead with the creations of Mexico's ancient indigenous artists and architects. Writing to Barbara Dreier on a summer's day in 1936, he described the physical frisson that these works produced as he imagined himself in the tropics:

> Today Monte Albán again! A big day. Again I got all cold, as if short of breath. And again I had fabulous respect for the spaces between the pyramids, and the ball court was marvelous once again. . . . And they keep discovering more. Monte Albán is one of the greatest experiences of my life. . . . It's wonderful to sit at the plaza again or in front of the museum, after all we now have time to be lazy. . . . There's beating of the pulse here of the most extreme worlds.[6]

Elsewhere he would write that Monte Albán was more perfect and beautiful than the Parthenon (even though he had never traveled to Athens). Like Anni, Josef felt the creative collision of worlds in Mexico. It freed him from the stifling formality of the Western tradition.

Though they had complete faith in its universal value, Anni and Josef Albers's passion for and embrace of art from Mexico and the Andean regions, as well as their collecting and the visible effects these works had on their own art, did not stem from neocolonialist romanticism. Anni's clearheaded assessment of their contacts with the cultures of South America deftly acknowledges the ambiguity of their ardor for perceived form produced in cultures that remained separate from their own:

> Perhaps it was this timeless quality in pre-Columbian art that first spoke to us, regardless of our ignorance of the special significance it must have had to a contemporary community. We were struck by the astounding variety of its articulation, by the numerous distinct cultures and resultant differing formulations. It made clear to us anew that a humble material, such as clay, can be turned into images equal to those made of precious material. It also taught us that a society need not be prosperous to produce great art. In fact, one wonders if the reverse is not true.[7]

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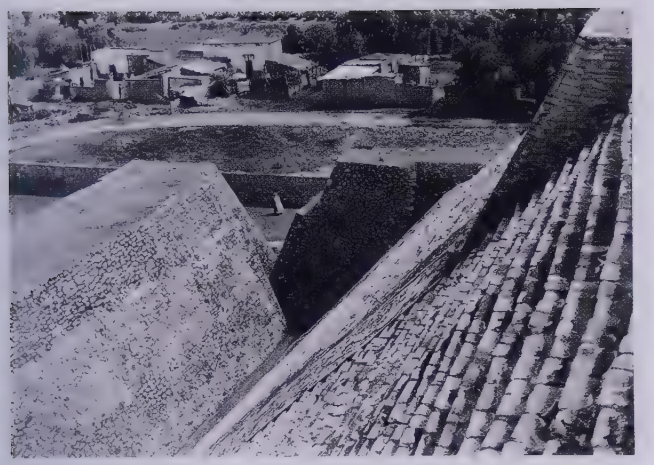
1. Anni Albers, *On Weaving* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1965), 68.
2. Anni Albers, letter to Vassily and Nina Kandinsky, August 22, 1936, in *Josef Albers and Wassily Kandinsky: Friends in Exile, A Decade of Correspondence 1929–1940*, ed. Nicholas Fox Weber (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2010), 87.
3. Anni Albers, preface to *Pre-Columbian Mexican Miniatures* (New York: Praeger, 1970)
4. Anni Albers, letter to Theodore Dreier, July 25, 1936. Original letter in the collection of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, CT.
5. *Periódico El Nacional*, Mexico City, August 16, 1936.
6. Josef Albers, letter to Barbara Loines Dreier, July 10, 1939. Original letter, written in German, in the collection of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, CT. Translation by the author.
7. Albers, preface to *Pre-Columbian Mexican Miniatures*.

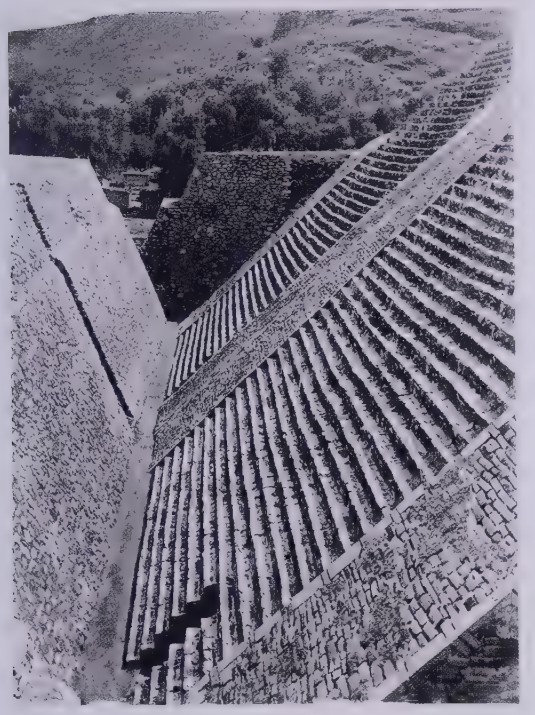
Josef Albers, *Variant/Adobe*, 1947. Oil on Masonite, 14 x 27 inches.

Anni Albers, *Monte Albán*, 1936. Silk, linen, and wool, 57 ½ x 44 ⅛ inches.

this page Josef Albers, Five Untitled Photographs of Monte Albán, 1939. Gelatin silver prints, four prints: 3 ¼ x 4 ¾ inches each; one print: 4 ¾ x 3 ¼ inches.

opposite page Josef Albers, Six Untitled Photographs of Tenayuca, 1937. Gelatin silver prints, four prints: 3 ¼ x 4 ¾ inches each; two prints: 4 ¾ x 3 ¼ inches each.





Josef Albers, *Tenayuca*, 1943 Oil on Masonite, 22 1/2 x 43 1/2 inches

Anni Albers, *La Luz I*, 1947. Cotton, hemp, and metallic gimp, 18 ½ x 32 ½ inches.

JOSEF ALBERS

Graphic Tectonic Lithographs

MICHAEL BEGGS

The titles Josef Albers gave to his artworks more often indicate visual affinities than offer literal interpretations. When he titled one of the prints in his *Graphic Tectonic* series (1942) *Shrine*, for example, it was because the finished work resembled or evoked a shrine, not because it represented one. In fact, after a viewer projects his or her experiences and prejudices onto the work's nested, endless lines, he or she might not see a shrine at all.[1] The title of the series, *Graphic Tectonic*, however, explains more about Albers's conception of the works than any of the titles of individual prints.[2]

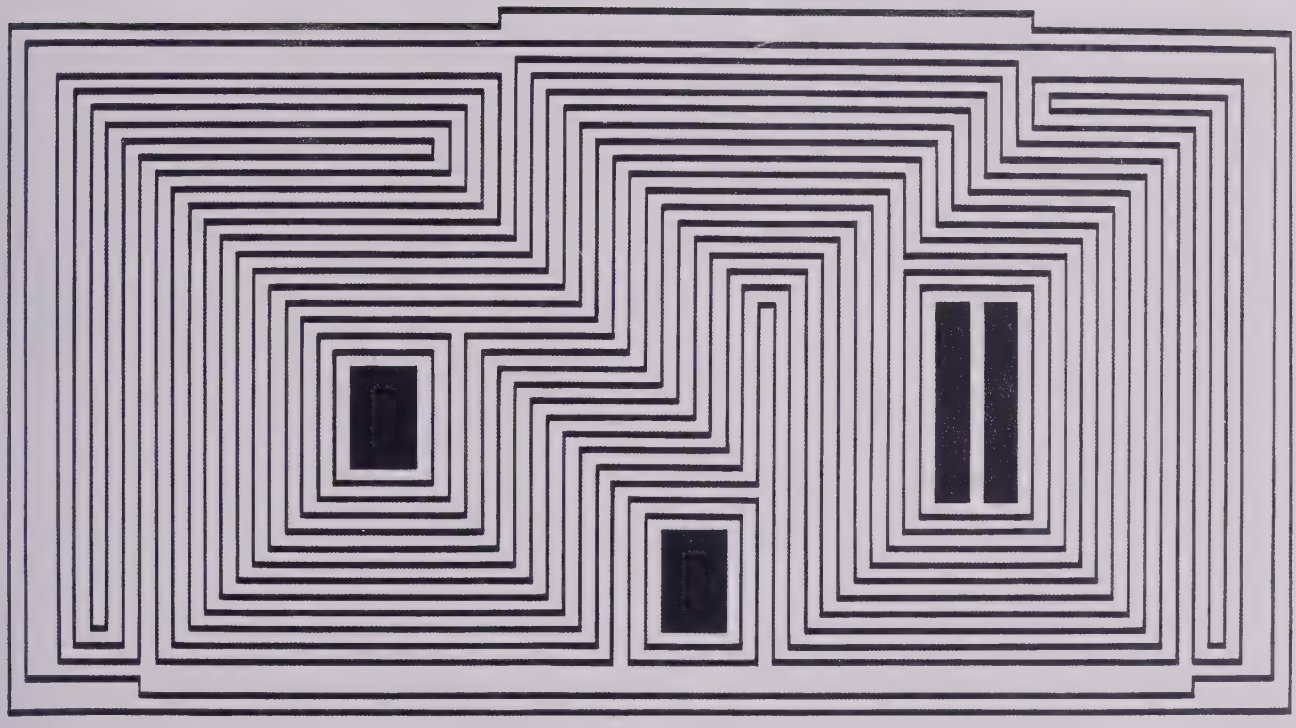
Because they are prints, these works are inherently *graphic*, but how they are *tectonic* is less clear. Their forms suggest structures like the pyramids, shrines, and sanctuaries from the pre-Columbian sites both Josef and his wife Anni loved to visit in Mexico. In elevation and plan, the regular, nested lines of the prints seem to mimic the stepped masses present in ancient sites across Mesoamerica. The title of one print, *To Monte Albán*, certainly supports this kind of interpretation, as do Albers's photographs of the rough and weathered exteriors of the pre-Columbian monuments, in particular the pyramids at Tenayuca and Monte Albán are abstracted and flattened into starkly contrasting figure-ground compositions of receding black-and-white parallel lines.

To read the prints in such a way is to understand them as depictions of sites or typologies seen and visited, but Albers was more interested in recording visual or perceptual phenomena than specific locations in his work. Writing about the *Graphic Tectonic* series in 1942, he offered an alternative way of reading them as architectonic works: "as the term *tectonic* implies, these abstract compositions are constructed, being built with elements that are produced by mechanical means and arranged in emphasized mechanical order."[3] Albers thought of these prints as distinctly architectural, not because they represent or depict structures, but because they themselves are structures. Emphasizing that the prints are solely composed of horizontal and vertical lines, whose right angles stubbornly refuse to project any kind of illusion of perspective, he wrote, "[They are] the most non-spatial graphic elements." And yet Albers built complex, airy, floating structures, in which "solid volume shifts to open space" and vice versa.[4] In drawn studies for the prints, he refined their forms and nesting lines to intensify their perceived spatial effect. The result is that the prints cannot be seen as merely two-dimensional.

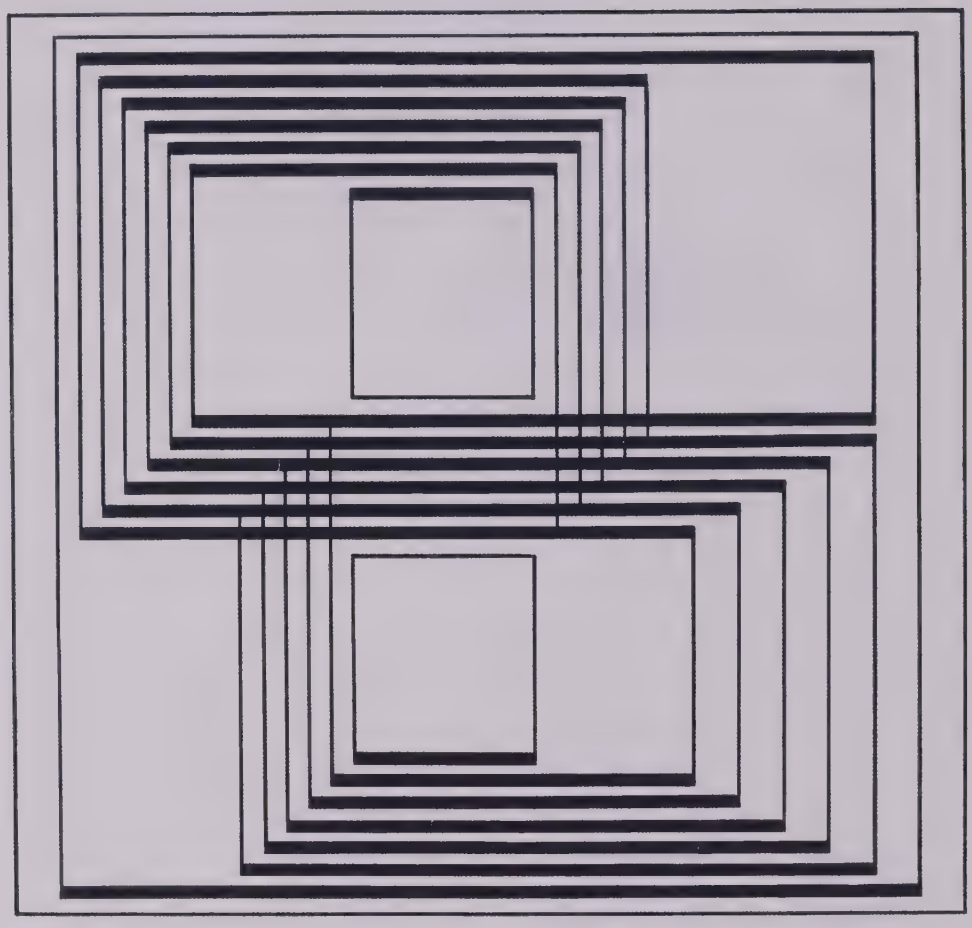
In the Albersian worldview, in which pebbles are miraculous and the goal of art instruction is to open eyes, the transformation of a two-dimensional arrangement of spatially inert lines into a lively, tumbling, impossible set of spaces and volumes is a sort of minor miracle, a feat of transcendence. Perhaps this transformation explains Albers's allusive titles: *Shrine*, *Introitus*, and *Seclusion* denote places or moments where transcendence occurs; *Ascension*, *Iterim*, and *To Monte Albán* all describe phases of transformation. If we look long enough, the structure will change and rebuild itself before our eyes, and where there was once a shrine something entirely new will stand.

Josef Albers teaching a drawing class, n.d. Photo by John Campbell.

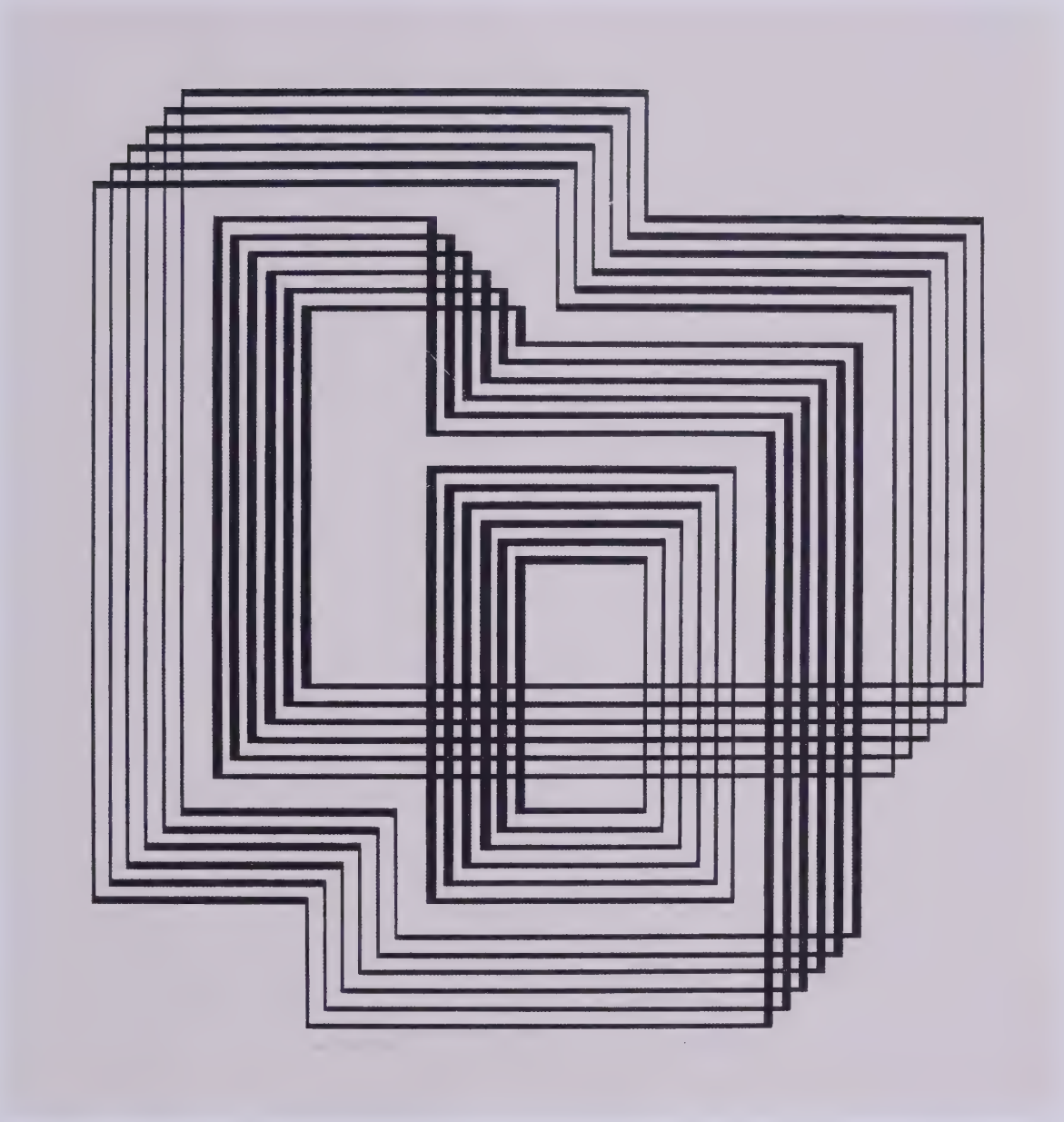
1. Josef Albers acknowledged the ambiguity of the prints, stating that they "perform space and volume illusions of multiple images, thereby inducing several interpretations." Josef Albers, "Graphic Tectonics (synopsis)," unpublished typescript, 1942, JA 79.48, Josef Albers Papers, Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, CT
2. The prints in the series are titled *Seclusion*, *Ascension*, *Prefatio*, *Interim*, *Co-Ordinal*, *To Monte Albán*, *Shrine*, *Introitus*, and *Sanctuary*
3. Albers, "Graphic Tectonics (synopsis)."
4. Ibid



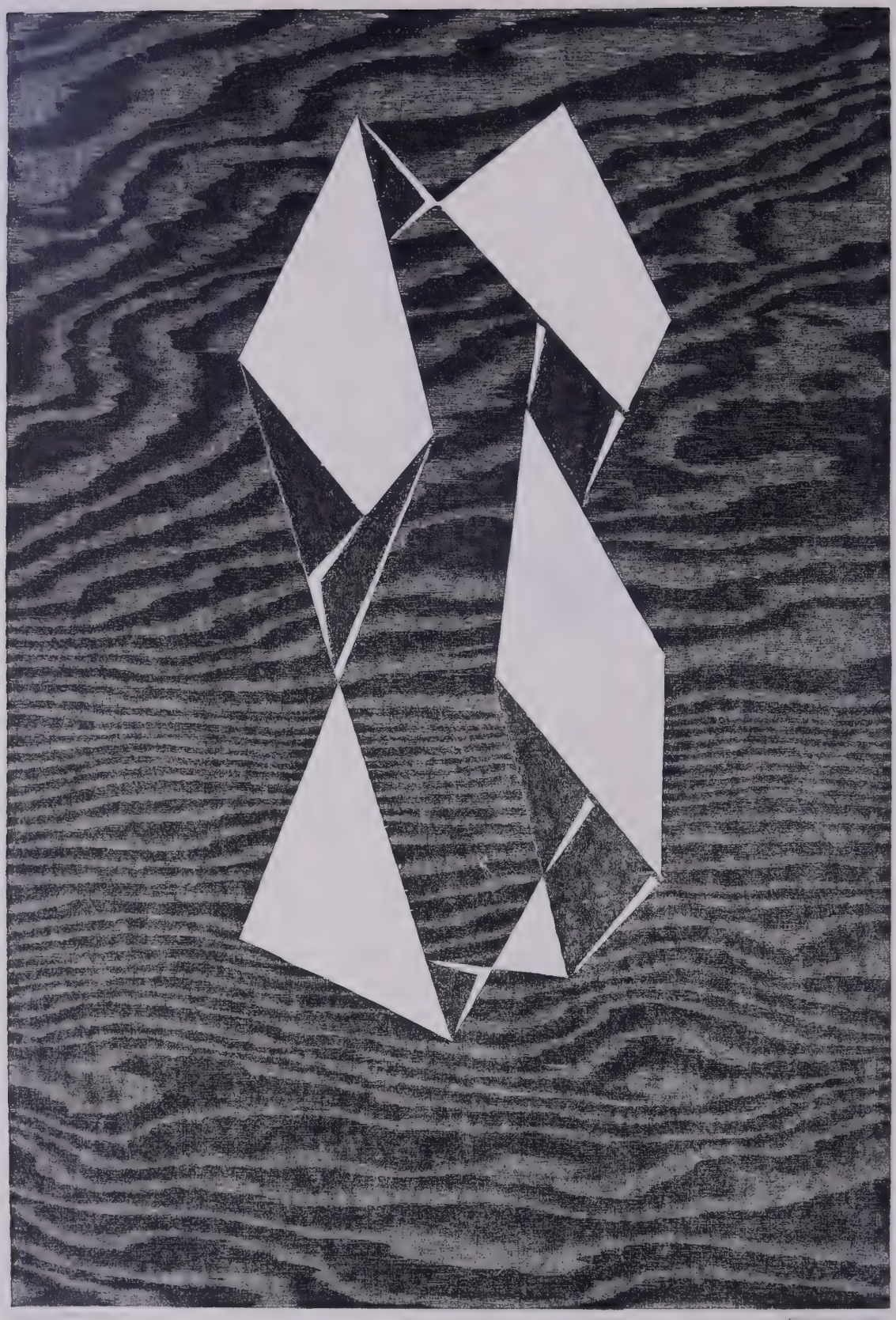
Josef Albers, *Sanctuary*, from the *Graphic Tectonic* series, 1942.
Lithograph, sheet size 19 x 24 inches.



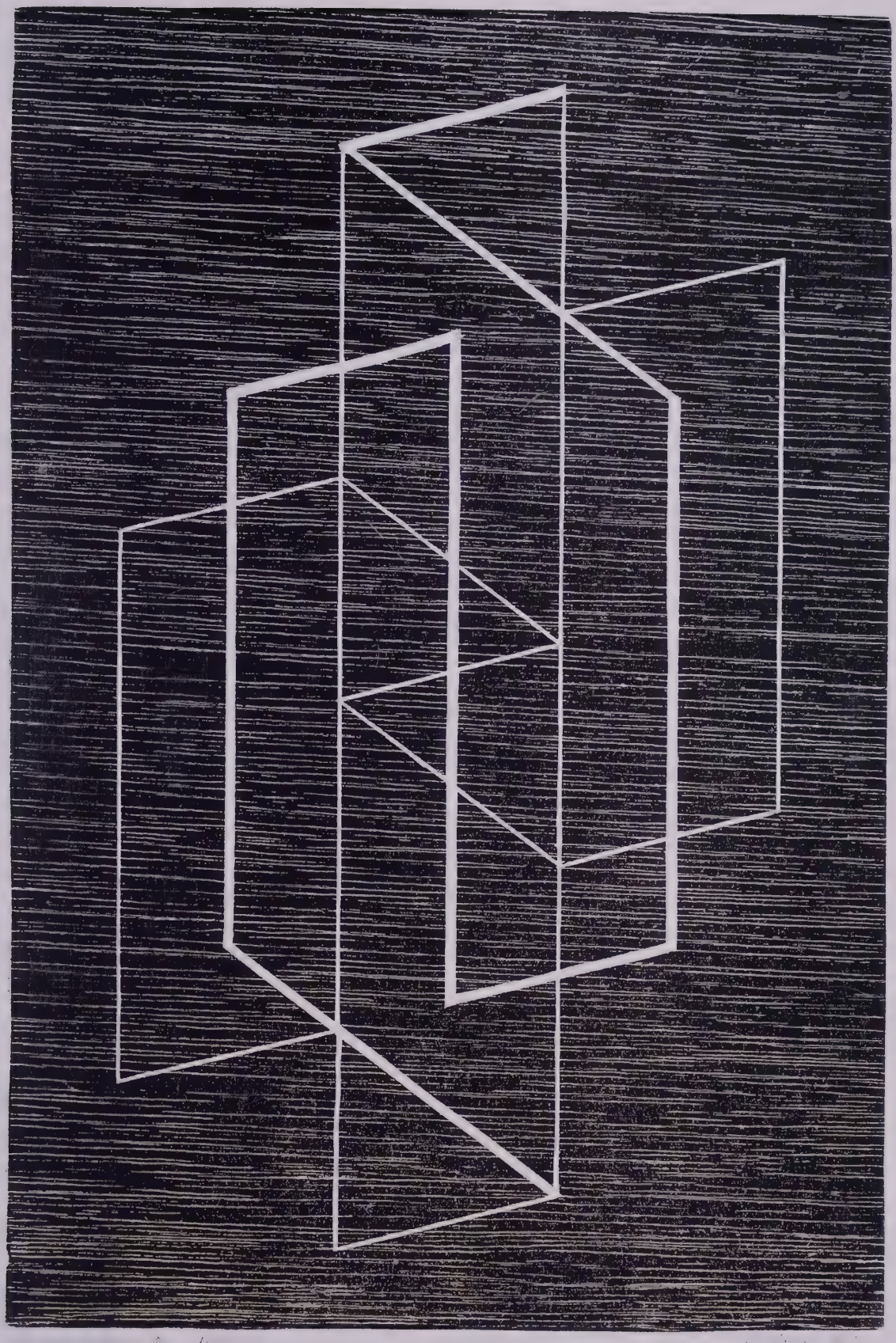
Josef Albers, *Seclusion*, from the *Graphic Tectonic* series, 1942. Lithograph, sheet size 19 x 24 inches. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.



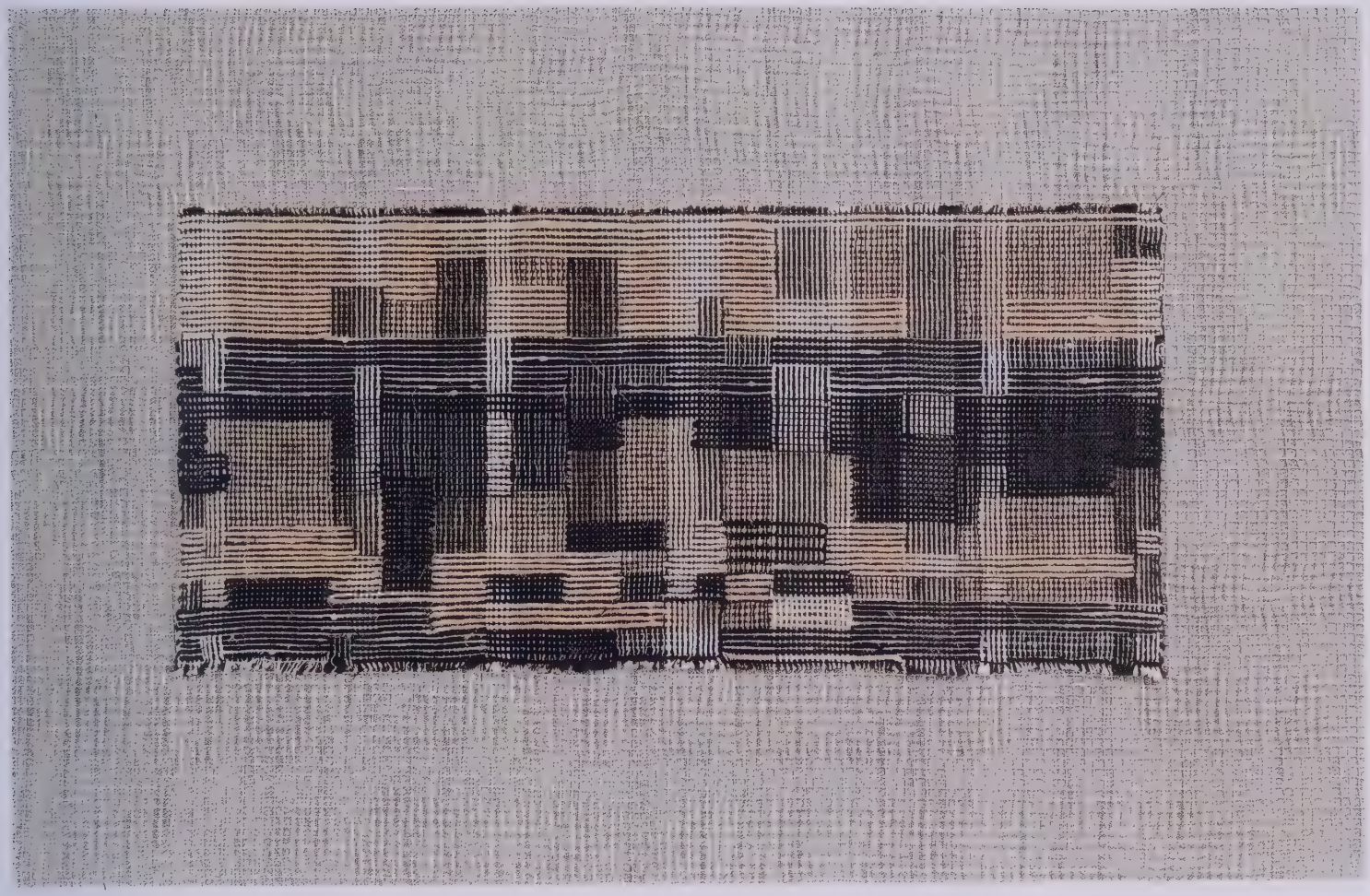
Josef Albers, *Shrine*, from the *Graphic Tectonic* series, 1942. Lithograph, sheet size 24 x 19 inches. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.



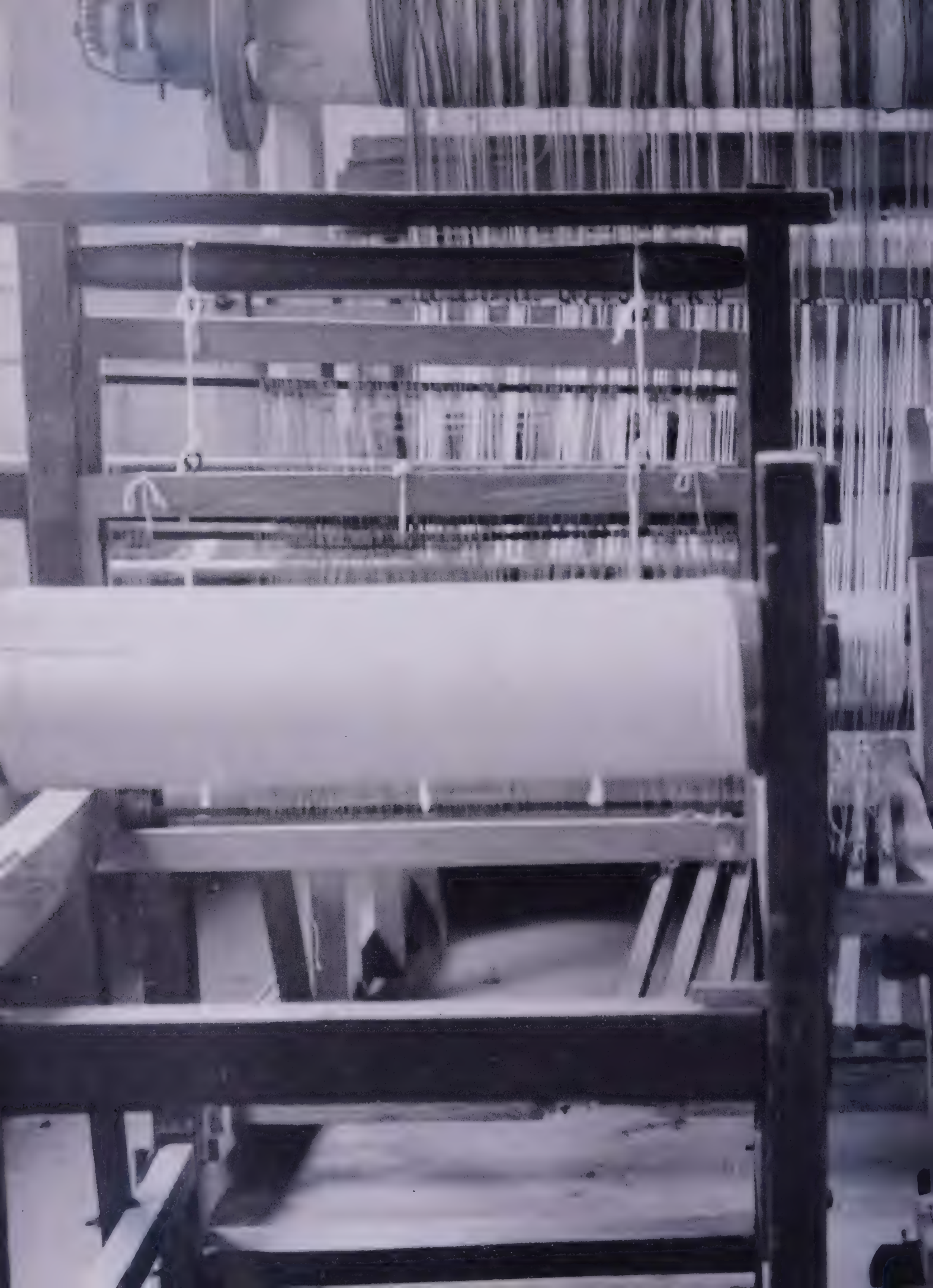
Josef Albers, *Astatic*, 1944. Woodcut on Japanese nacre kozo paper, sheet size 17 ½ x 11 ⅛ inches.

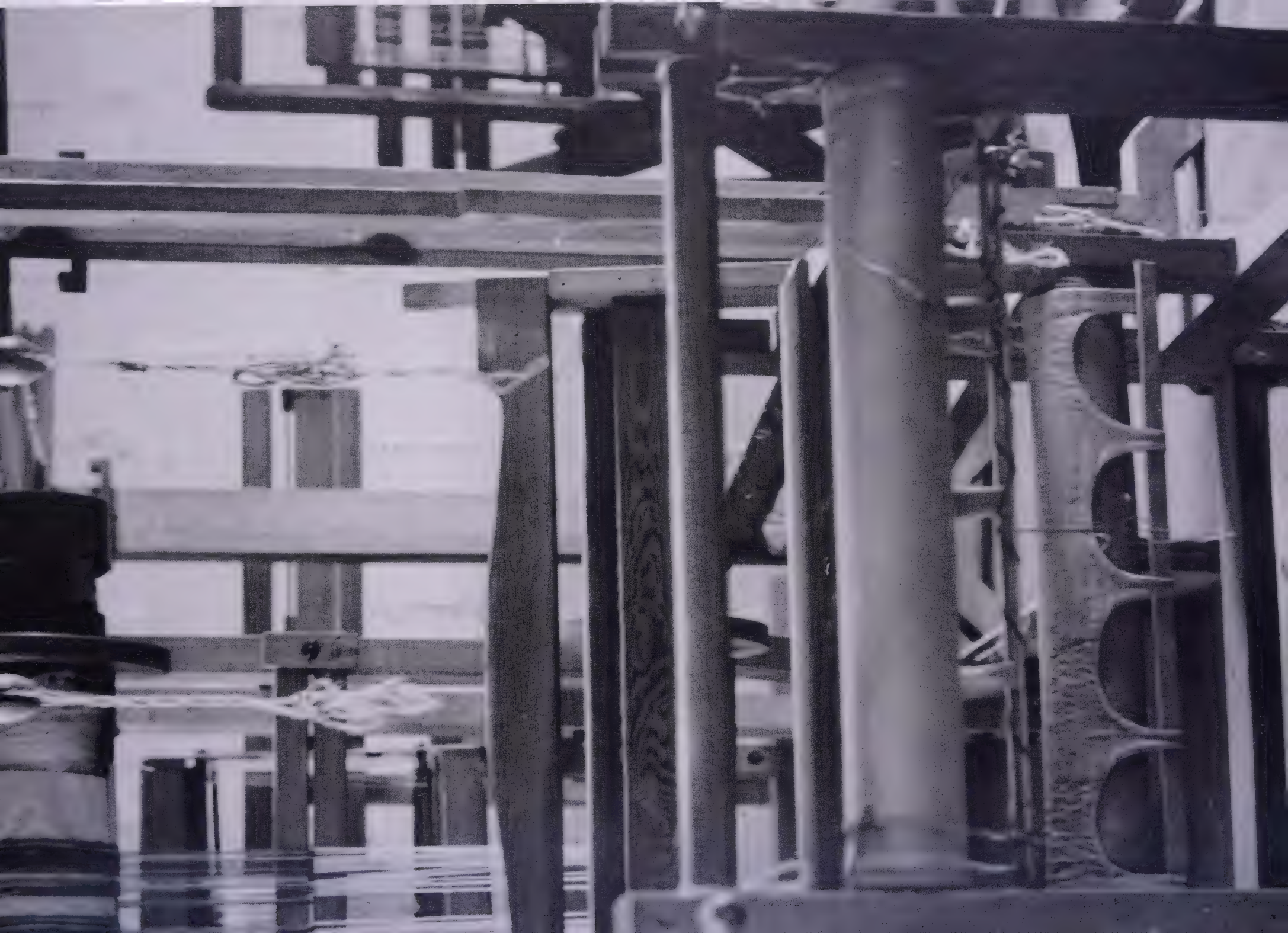


Josef Albers, *Multiplex A*, 1947. Woodcut, sheet size 16 ½ x 12 ½ inches.



Anni Albers, *Cityscape*, 1949. Bast and cotton, 17 ½ x 26 ½ inches.

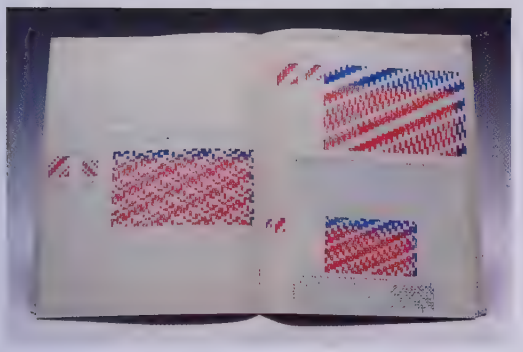




WEAVING

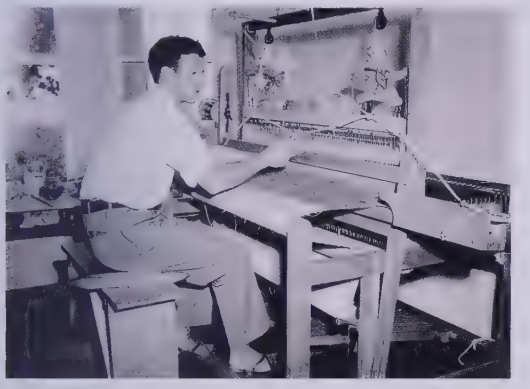
JENNI SORKIN

Jacqueline Gourevitch, *Looms*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches.
Anni Albers spooling thread, n.d. Photo by Bill Reed.



Pages from Lolita Georgia's weaving class notebook, 1935.
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

top: Alex Reed at loom, n.d.
middle: Don Page weaving, n.d.
bottom: Trude Guermonprez's textile exhibition at Black Mountain College, installation view, n.d.



Weaving was one of the foundational and longest-running workshops at Black Mountain College. When Anni Albers initially established the weaving curriculum in 1934, she intended it to emulate that of the Bauhaus, which included designing for industry. In practice, the American workshop operated in a much more modest capacity, as the industry of hand-weaving shifted into the realm of fine-arts production as a result of World War II. The war had effectively decimated the industry, less because of the limited availability of raw materials like silk and more because machine-woven fabric bolts could be decorated economically through silk-screen printing.[1]

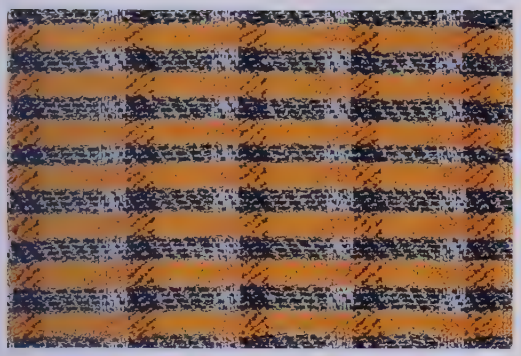
The Black Mountain weaving studio contained nine manual looms and one upright tapestry loom. Its location under the Studies Building was, as Albers boasted, "one of the coolest places in summer."[2] Albers emphasized a return to the foundational principles of textile construction: her students learned to draft and read weave patterns, tie knots, calculate warp and weft, dress the loom, analyze color relationships, and weave.[3] She was both philosophical and poetic in her no-nonsense approach. As one student recorded, probably verbatim: "The difficulty in reading the draft is that it seldom gives you a true picture. It is like the score to an orchestra. You can see the notes but not so easily can you imagine the total sound."[4]

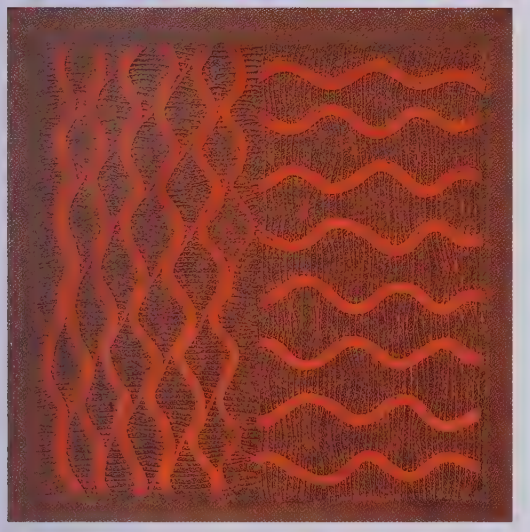
The inspiration Albers found in studying ancient design structures and collecting pre-Columbian textile fragments led her to offer her students an expanded weaving practice, beyond even that of the Bauhaus, training them not just on European frame looms but also backstrap looms, used in indigenous communities throughout Bolivia, Mexico, and Peru. Infinitely portable, because they utilize the weaver's waist for tension, backstrap looms allow for improvisation in color and texture.

During the early 1940s, Albers's favored students were young men: Don Page, who came as a student teacher in the fall of 1940 and served as an assistant instructor from 1941 through 1942, and Alex Reed, who is best known for designing Quiet House, a 1942 stone sanctuary that commemorated the death of mathematics professor Theodore Dreier's young son. Page went on to obtain a graduate degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and joined the graphics department of I. M. Pei's architecture firm.[5] Reed traveled with the Alberses to Mexico in 1939. In 1940, Anni and Reed collaborated on an exhibition of jewelry made from common household objects, which was shown at the Willard Gallery in New York and, later, in 1946, at the Museum of Modern Art. Reed also taught for Albers during her 1940–41 sabbatical, and went on to teach design with György Kepes at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.[6]

Though Black Mountain isolated itself from the vernacular textile community in the immediate Western Highlands vicinity, it became crucially linked, through Albers, to a large network of émigré women weavers throughout the United States. These included a peer from the Bauhaus, Marli Ehrman, who established the textile department at the Institute

1. Christa C. Mayer Thurman, "Textiles," in *Design in America: The Cranbrook Vision 1925–1950* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Detroit Institute of the Arts, 1983), 197
2. Anni Albers, in conversation with Marli Ehrman, March 4, 1949, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
3. Elizabeth Osbourne Richards, notes from Anni Albers's weaving class, c. 1944–46, Black Mountain College Document #34A, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
4. Nell Goldsmith, notes from Anni Albers's weaving class, c. 1942–44, Black Mountain College Document #26A, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
5. See Phyllis Meras, "Architect Don Page Dies at Age 89 in Sarasota, Fla.," *Vineyard Gazette* June 7, 2007.
6. Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 52





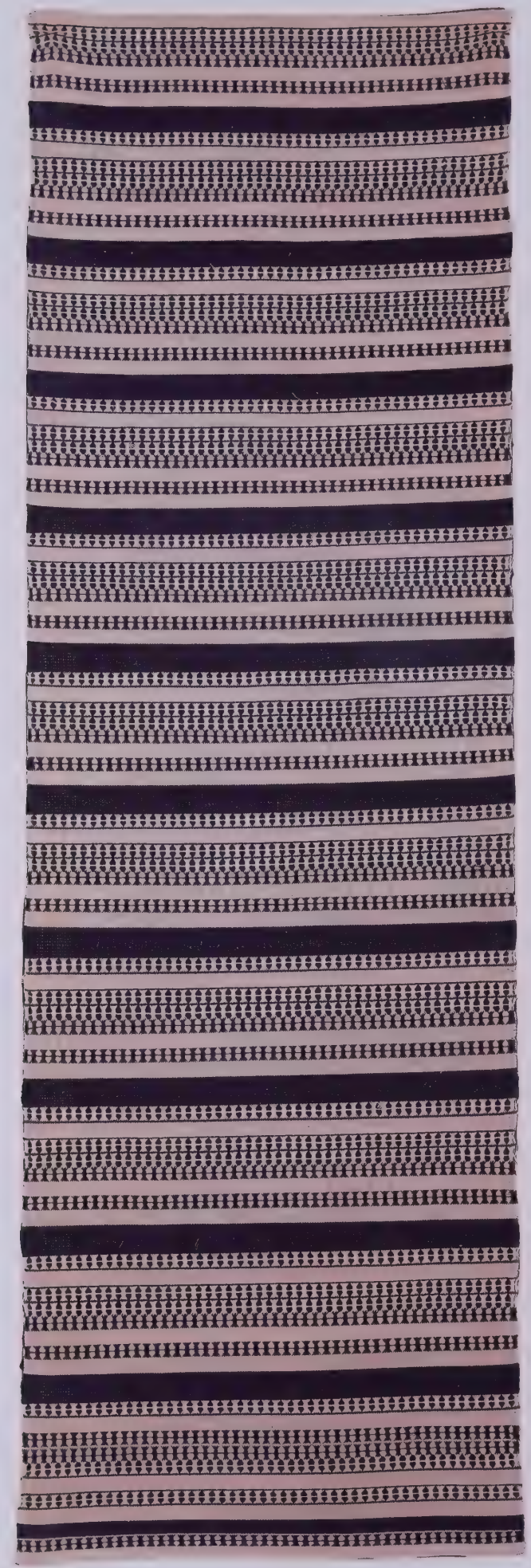
opposite: Two students weaving on a rug loom, n.d. Photo by John Stix.
top Lore Kadden Lindenfeld, *Woven Sample: 8 Harness Group Weaving*, 1945–48. Wool, 6 ½ x 10 ½ inches.
middle, top Lore Kadden Lindenfeld, *Color Study: Black, Gold, Red*, c. 1945–48. Paint on paper, 8 ½ x 8 inches.
middle, bottom Don Page, *Orange Fabric with Changing Threads*, c. 1936–42. Fabric, 12 ¾ x 12 ¾ inches.
bottom Weavings by Fred Goldsmith, 1943–44. Cotton, 54 x 25 inches. Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

of Design in Chicago in 1947; Trude Guermonprez, who had spent the war years in the Netherlands and later founded the weaving program at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland; Else Regensteiner, who came to study with Albers during the summer of 1942 and later inaugurated the Weaving Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; Lili Blumeneau, who became keeper of textiles at Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, in New York; and Lore Kadden Lindenfeld, who went on to make tapestries and teach weaving courses in Japan.[7]

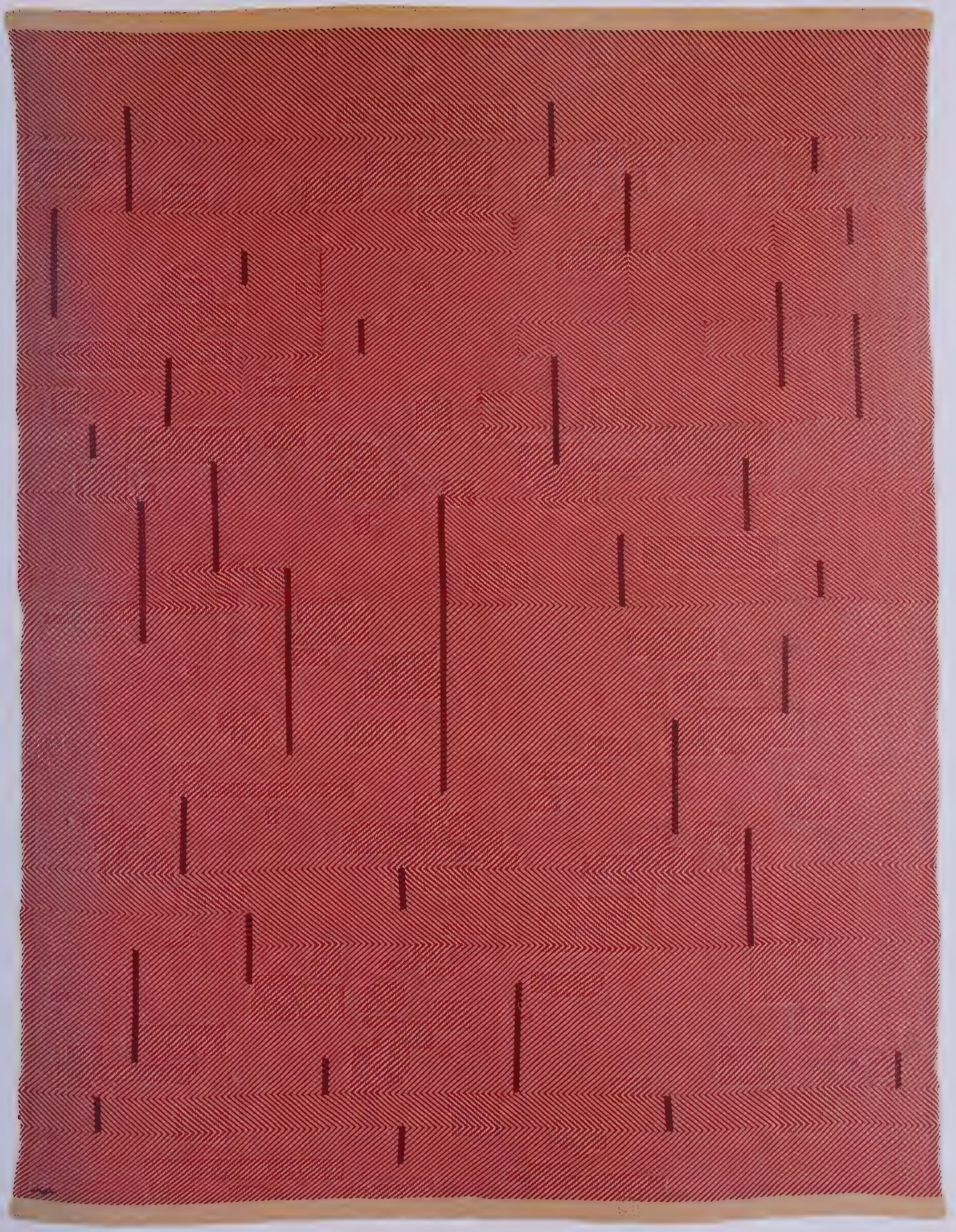
Guermonprez came to Black Mountain on Albers's invitation. The daughter of the famed musicians Heinrich and Johanna Jalowetz, who as Austrian nationals and Jewish refugees had fled Europe and arrived at Black Mountain in 1939, Guermonprez secured a visa to the United States in June 1946 that allowed her to teach alongside Albers from 1947 through 1948. Blumeneau and Lindenfeld studied with Albers during the summer of 1946, as did the Chicago-based fiber artist Claire Zeisler, who had assembled a fine collection of non-Western art (at the time referred to as "primitive"), which included a great deal of pre-Columbian textiles. Like Albers, Zeisler found the sophisticated weave structures of pre-Incan Peruvian fabrics to influence her own work; as she described it, "I think of my work as sort of sophisticated primitive."[8] With all four women in the studio simultaneously, the conversation that summer was likely rich and stimulating, as they shared a reverence for the unmatched complexity of preindustrial weaving techniques. Albers's ideas, preserved through her writings, are echoed in an article Blumeneau wrote in 1950 on Coptic weaving: "The masterpieces of these weavers furnish inspiration in our time and the lessons they teach are thoroughly applicable to modern design."[9]

Marie Murelius and Anthony Landreau were the college's last weaving instructors. Murelius came from San Francisco to teach weaving during the summer session of 1953. Landreau, who had worked as an assistant to the textile designer and weaver Dorothy Liebes, was a student during that session. By then, the weaving studio had already fallen into disuse, yet Landreau stayed on, becoming the college's only remaining weaving instructor, from fall 1954 until its closure at the end of the summer session in 1956.[10] While not a direct student of Albers, Landreau became an expert on Turkish textiles, publishing numerous articles and exhibition catalogues on ethnic Kurdish weaving traditions.[11] He was the director of the Textile Museum in Washington, DC, from 1971 until 1974. The weaving workshop at Black Mountain strongly determined the emergent discourse on textiles in the United States, situating the medium as a vigorous champion of modernism and its skilled immersion in formalist issues of color, structure, and form.

7. See Peggy Whitney Hobbs, "Lore Kadden Lindenfeld: Preserving the Spirit of Black Mountain College through Retrospectives," *Fiberarts* 24, no. 3 (November–December 1997): 20.
8. Claire Zeisler, interview by Dennis Barrie, June 26, 1981, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-claire-zeisler-12076.
9. Lili Blumeneau, "The Coptic Weavers," *Craft Horizons* 10, no. 3 (Fall 1950): 31.
10. Anthony Landreau obituary, *Washington Post*, June 8, 2009; http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/08/AR2009060801513.html. See also Harris, 266
11. See Anthony N. Landreau, *From the Bosporus to Samarkand: Flat Woven Rugs* (Washington, DC: Textile Museum, 1969); *America Underfoot: A History of Floor Coverings from Colonial Times to the Present* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976); "Kurdish Kilim Weaving in the Van-Hakkari District of Eastern Turkey," *Textile Museum Journal* 3, no. 4 (1973): 27–42; *Yoruk: The Nomadic Weaving Tradition of the Middle East* (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Institute of Art, 1978); *Flowers of the Yayla: Yoruk Weaving of the Toros Mountains* (Washington, DC: Textile Museum, 1983).



Lore Kadden Lindenfeld, *Black/White Hanging*, 1948. Cotton, 71 7/8 x 23 7/8 inches.



Anni Albers, *With Verticals*, 1946. Cotton and linen, 61 x 46 ¼ inches

Elizabeth Jennerjahn, *Cross*, 1949. Wool, 12 ½ x 10 inches.

Elizabeth Jennerjahn, *Untitled (Weaving)*, c. 1951. Mixed fabrics, 25 ½ x 26 ¼ inches.

: Anni Albers and Alexander Reed, *Neck Piece*, c. 1940/1988
Corks, bobby pins, and thread

Anni Albers and Alexander Reed, *Neck Piece*, 1940
Aluminum strainer, paper clips, and chain

Anni Albers and Alexander Reed, *Necklace*, c. 1940
Bobby pins on metal-plated chain.

Anni Albers and Alexander Reed, *Necklace from Hardware*, c. 1940.
Washers and grosgrain ribbon.

ANNI ALBERS

Free-Hanging Room Divider

BRENDA DANILOWITZ

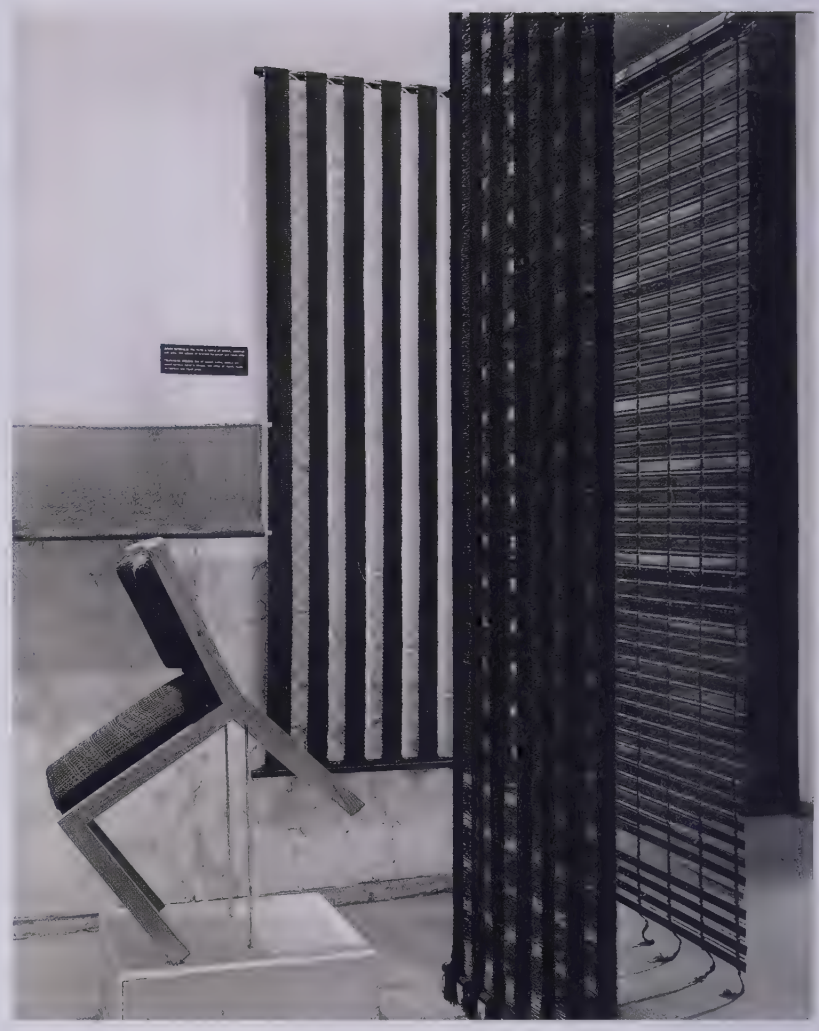
Anni Albers's partition materials, or Room Dividers, were first shown in the landmark 1949 exhibition "Anni Albers: Textiles" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York—the museum's first one-person exhibition devoted to a textile artist.[1] The initial impetus came from Edgar Kaufman Jr., director of MoMA's Industrial Design Department, who proposed the idea to Albers at Black Mountain College during the 1948 summer session. Philip Johnson, who directed MoMA's Architecture and Design Department, was the curator. From fall 1948 until her show opened the following year, Albers devoted herself to planning the exhibition and developing new textiles expressly for it. The *New York Times* noted that the works on view involved three categories: the artistic, the functional, and the experimental—the last was a reference to the open-weave Room Dividers shown in the exhibition, which were hung at intervals free of the surrounding walls and were fixed to the floor and ceiling of the exhibition space by barely visible threads.[2]

Made from such unconventional yarns such as horsehair, cellophane, jute, and Lurex—a synthetic metallic film-coated fiber, newly available in 1946—the Room Dividers combined rigid and soft materials to create tectonic screens that allowed light and air to circulate through and around them. Albers invoked, as precedents for these structures, the veil-like fabric panels used in ancient Japanese houses, "to form rooms and allow the breeze to pass through."[3] Albers was a great admirer of the open weaves (also known as leno, gauze, or cross weave) developed by Andean weavers, and in her Room Dividers she created new formulations of these traditional weaves, toward her goal of aligning textiles and architecture more closely.

That goal took shape in Albers's training ground at the Bauhaus's Weaving Workshop. Architecture had been the founding trope of the Bauhaus, enshrined in its mission, its pedagogy, and its structures. The Preliminary Course focused on gaining knowledge of materials through experimentation; the workshops took a step toward professionalism, engaging those materials—ceramics, wood, glass, metal, yarns, paint—toward an ultimate realization in architecture.

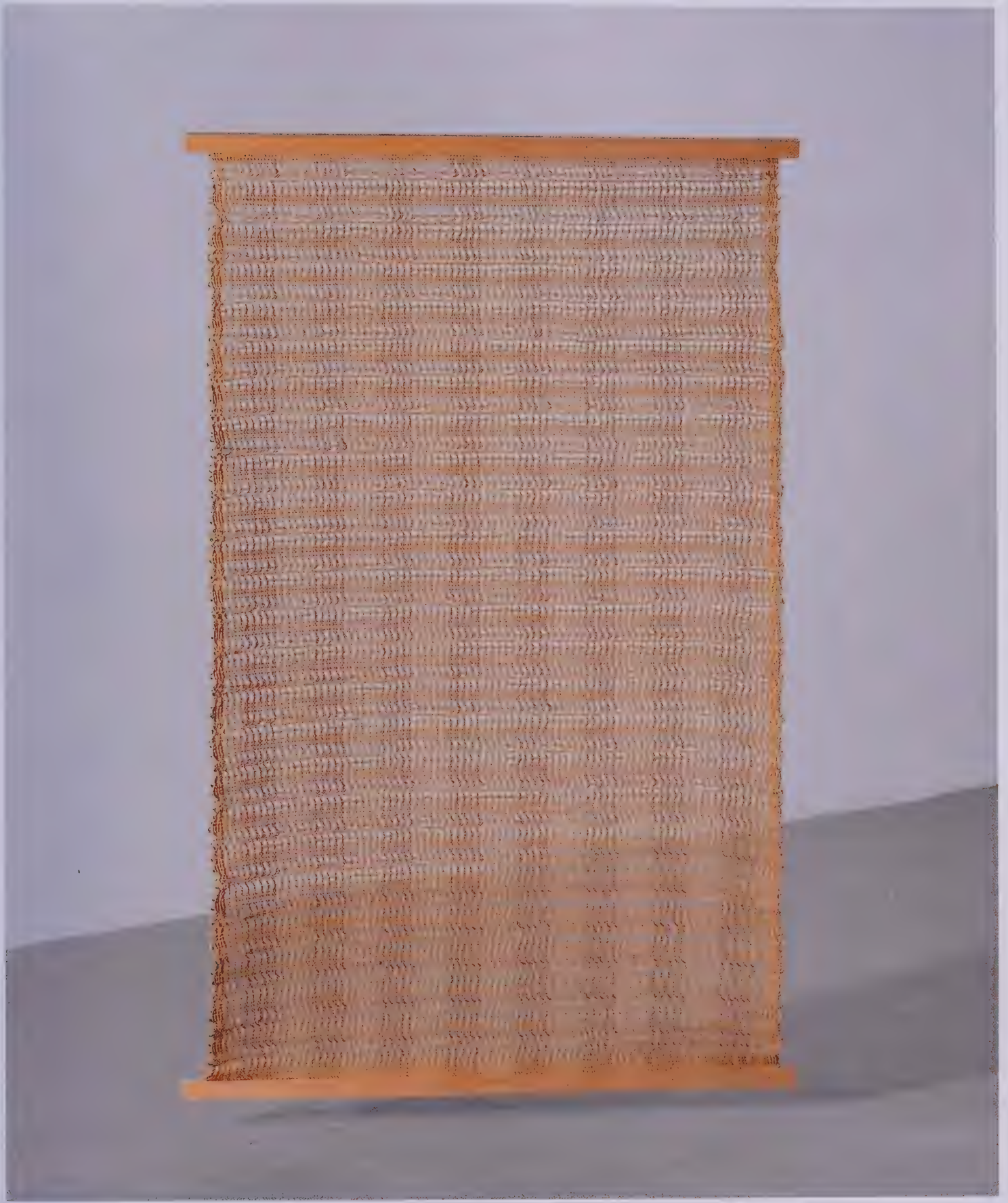
Albers addressed the question of textiles as architecture head-on in her essay "The Pliable Plane." There she argued that the seemingly dissimilar qualities of architecture (its grounded and fixed nature) and textiles (portable and changing) were subsumed in their shared creation of purposeful structures. Both involved a process of constructing complex wholes from discrete parts that retain their identities. Conceding that this fundamental similarity diminished as new technologies increasingly led "to fusion as opposed to linkage" in the processes of construction, Albers appealed to architects to turn to textile designers. "The essentially structural principles that relate the work of building and weaving could form the basis of a new understanding between the architect and inventive weaver . . . and textiles, so often no more than an after-thought in planning, might take a place again as a contributing thought."[4]

Although the Room Dividers would remain experiments in her oeuvre, their very existence would inspire Albers's weaving students, among them the young Robert Rauschenberg—whose early Combine paintings, such as *Red Interior* (1954) (which explores the material qualities of textiles), as well as his 1954 stage set for Merce Cunningham's *Minutiae* (an architecture of fabric-covered screens around and through which the dancers move), surely owe her a debt.[5]



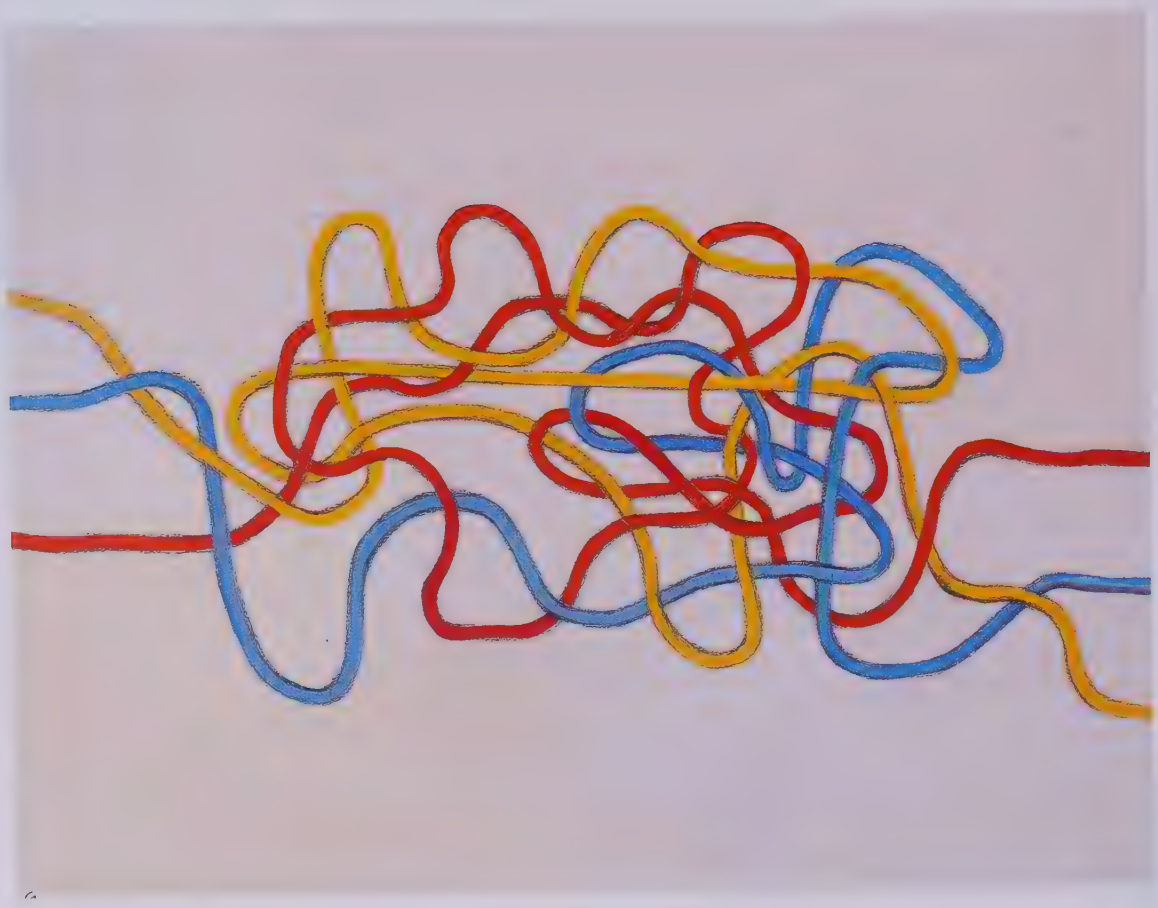
"Anni Albers: Textiles," September 14–November 6, 1949, installation view, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo by Soichi Sunami.

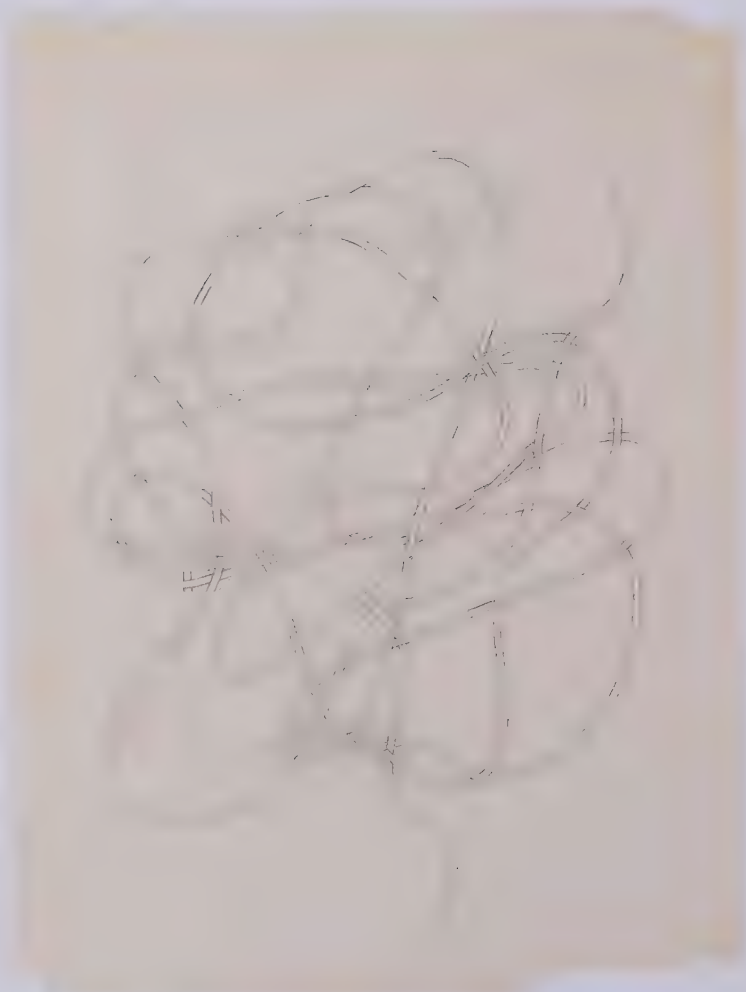
1. The exhibition subsequently traveled to twenty-six museums in the United States and Canada.
2. "Textiles Exhibit Will Open Today," *New York Times*, September 14, 1949, 39.
3. Anni Albers, "The Pliable Plane," *Perspecta* 4 (1957): 40.
4. Ibid.
5. Albers's influence on Rauschenberg is entirely overlooked in the literature. For example, see Charles Stuckey's long list of possible artist sources. See "Minutiae and Rauschenberg's Combine Mode," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Combines* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, and Steidl, Göttingen, 2005), 200. Rauschenberg, who, according to Stuckey, moved to New York in late summer 1949 shortly before Albers's exhibition opened at MoMA, was at Black Mountain College in 1948–49, and took Albers's weaving course



Anni Albers, *Free-Hanging Room Divider*, c. 1949. Jute and Lurex, 53 x 34 inches.

Anni Albers, *Free-Hanging Room Divider*, c. 1949. Cotton, cellophane, and braided horsehair, 87 x 32 ½ inches.





opposite top Anni Albers, *Knot 2*, 1947. Gouache on paper, 17 x 21 1/8 inches.
opposite bottom Anni Albers, *Drawing for a Knot*, 1947. Graphite on tracing paper, 23 x 17 1/8 inches.
above Anni Albers, *Drawing for a Knot*, 1948. Gouache on paper, 13 3/4 x 10 3/4 inches.

RAY JOHNSON

Untitled

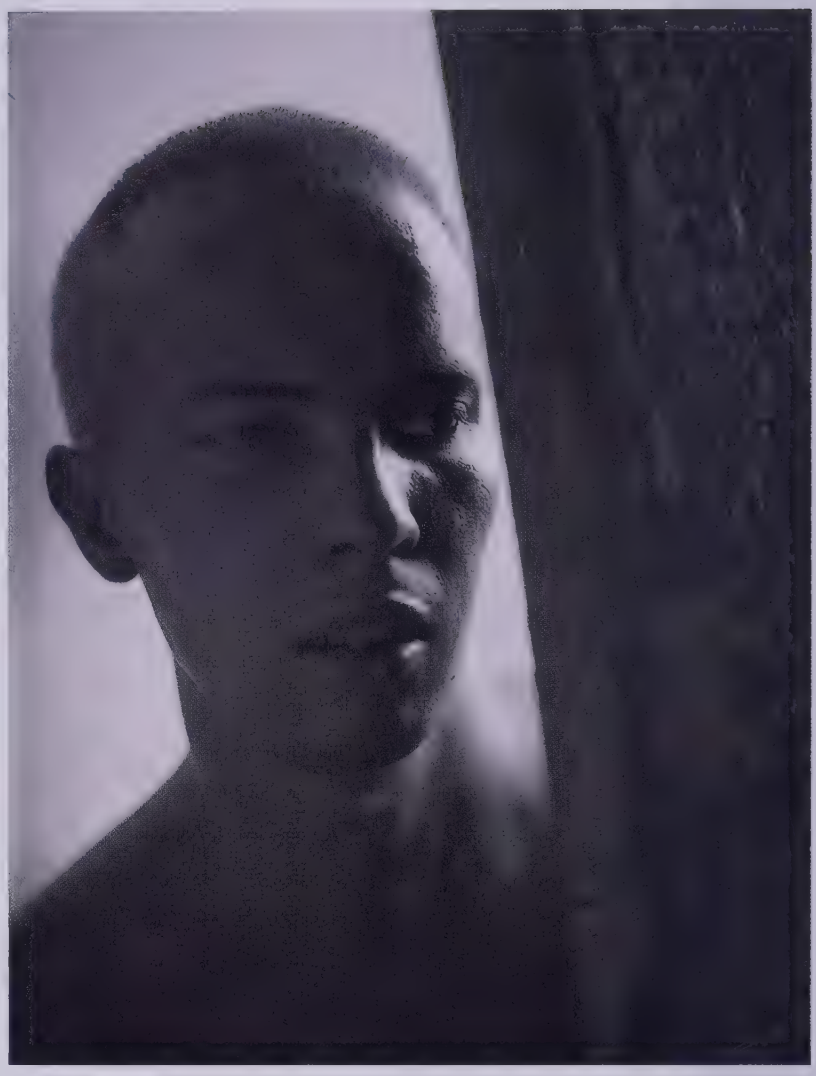
RUTH ERICKSON

At first glance, *Untitled* (c. 1951) consists of a grid of four-inch squares that span the surface of the painting. But on closer examination, this regularity seems to give way, dissolving into hundreds, if not thousands, of narrow bands of color—blues, greens, mustard yellow, maroon, salmon pink—an array of hues scrupulously laid down by Ray Johnson. The bands intersect with one another, transforming in color at each intersection to generate a dense web of rectilinear lines. From this impossible chaos of color and will, an order once again begins to take shape as one realizes that the same pattern repeats vertically. The organizing principles of Johnson's *Untitled* emerge through the kind of patient scrutiny that he must have himself possessed in creating the gouache-on-paper painting. He built the intricate composition through the duplication of structurally identical squares painted in variegated color schemes, a repetition and variation that renders a magnificently vibrant artwork and that registers the many lessons Johnson learned at Black Mountain College.

Johnson heard of Black Mountain College through Elaine Schmitt Urbain when they were attending a summer art school at the Art Institute of Chicago; both applied and were accepted to the Summer Art Institute of 1945. Born in Detroit in 1927, Johnson had demonstrated an enthusiasm for art from a young age, taking classes at the Detroit Art Institute and Cass Technical High School, though he acquired his most rigorous training, as well as many of his lifelong friendships, at Black Mountain.[1] A student through the Summer Art Institute of 1948 (with a short hiatus in New York City), Johnson studied painting and drawing with Ilya Bolotowsky, woodworking with Molly Gregory, weaving with Franziska Mayer and Trude Guermonprez, and, most important to his formation as an artist, color, design, and drawing with Josef Albers.[2]

By all accounts, Johnson was a serious student. Hazel Larsen Archer photographed him on various occasions taking notes in Albers's classes. (He purportedly burned the notebooks in the 1950s.) Albers likewise seems to have recognized the young artist's commitment and talent, securing a commission for him to design the cover of the industrial-design magazine *Interiors* in 1947.[3] Johnson's early geometric paintings capture his incorporation of Albers's color theory and exercises, especially the capacity of color and pattern to evoke optical illusions such as movement. The overlapping and intersecting lines of color in *Untitled* also point to the influence of Anni Albers and her innovative weaving program at Black Mountain. The work has a remarkably strong morphological relationship to weaving: the thin bands of color mimic threads, their perpendicular layering recalls the warp and weft of the loom, and the complex pattern resembles many of the patterns and textiles that Albers brought back from her numerous trips to Mexico.[4]

After leaving Black Mountain and relocating to New York, Johnson continued to create geometric paintings until the mid-1950s, exhibiting with the American Abstract Artists (of which both Albers and Bolotowsky were founding members) between 1951 and 1953. While this genre of work appears far removed from his later and better-known work with photocopies, collage, and mail art, Johnson's artistic life and work manifest the enduring influence of Black Mountain, including his use of diverse materials, the grid, and color; his interest in coded languages and symbols; his practice of collage; his sense that art should be for gifting and trading rather than for museums and the marketplace; and his network of friendships.[5] In many ways, Johnson never strayed far from his Black Mountain College roots, forming a twenty-year partnership with sculpture teacher Richard Lippold, exchanging letters and artwork with fellow student Ruth Asawa, and maintaining friendships with many alums and teachers, including Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, Susan Weil, Paul Taylor, Viola Farber, and Nicholas Cernovich.[6]



Hazel Larsen Archer, *Ray Johnson*, c. 1945–48. Gelatin silver print, 9 x 6 ¾ inches. Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

1. See Arthur Secunda, "My Ray: A Personal Recollection," in *From BMC to NYC: The Tutelary Years of Ray Johnson 1943–1967* (Asheville, NC: Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 2010), 15.
2. See Mary Emma Harris, "Ray Johnson at Black Mountain College," in *Black Mountain College Dossiers* 4 (1997): 65.
3. Ibid., 66.
4. Kate Erin Dempsey, "Ray Johnson in Correspondence with Marcel Duchamp and Beyond," PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2013, 110.
5. For an excellent overview of Johnson's mature work, see *Ray Johnson: Correspondences*, ed. Donna De Salvo and Catherine Gudis (Columbus, OH: Wexner Center for the Arts, 1999).
6. Ibid., 17

Ray Johnson, *Untitled*, c. 1951. Gouache and watercolor on paper, mounted on board, 27 ¾ x 27 ¼ inches.

Ray Johnson, *Asawa Summer 1946*, 1946. Ink and watercolor on paper, 3 ⅜ x 6 inches.

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY: HAZEL LARSEN ARCHER, PHOTOGRAPHER, EDUCATOR

ALICE SEBRELL

Portrait of Hazel Larsen Archer, 1952. Photo by Marie Tavroges Stilkind. Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC

Josef Albers's color-theory class with Hazel Larsen Archer, n.d.

Hazel-Frieda Larsen first came to Black Mountain College from Milwaukee State Teachers College in 1944 to attend the first Summer Art Institute, drawn there by a brief article in the local newspaper.[1] Larsen returned in 1945, staying for nine years altogether, first as a student, then as a teacher of photography. Deeply impacted by the teaching of Josef Albers and R. Buckminster Fuller, she also studied with Lyonel Feininger, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall (who loaned her a Leica camera), Josef Breitenbach, Walter Gropius, Leo Lionni, and Alvin Lustig. From 1950 to 1953, she was a key administrator at the college, first as registrar, then as treasurer. She also sat on the Board of Fellows. From the time of Larsen's arrival in 1944 until Albers's departure in 1949, Albers helped her to "learn to see" through his classes in color, design, and *matière* studies. In describing his influence, Larsen said, "Albers had this tremendous capacity to teach. And I don't mean to instruct or to pass on. But to sort of open avenues."[2]

Larsen first met Fuller at Black Mountain College during the summer session of 1948, and they became lifelong friends, so much so that in 1949 Fuller granted her a license to develop Dymaxion principles.[3] It was Fuller's transformational work with geometric forms that helped Larsen develop an understanding of the "essence of invisible relationships," initiating her lifelong calling to dissolve hindrances to human perception. For Larsen, the ideal education consisted of "continuous moments of touching the unknown," guided only by a deep, natural curiosity and by the enjoyment of process as both a means and an end. "Find out for yourself," she said, believing in the power of every person's individual curiosity to lead and guide them through firsthand experience.[4] During the legendary summer of 1948, Larsen took the now-iconic photographs of Fuller in his classroom surrounded by geometric models of spheres, tetrahedrons, and domes. He took her up in a small airplane so she could photograph, from a bird's-eye perspective, his failed attempt at building a geodesic dome (earning it the moniker the Supine Dome) at Black Mountain in 1948.[5] In a 1955 letter to the Guggenheim Foundation, Fuller praised Larsen's photographic vision: "the overall integrity of life and universe clearly puls[es] serenely in her photographs."[6]

Outdoor photography class at the 1946 Summer Art Institute. Photo by Beaumont Newhall.

1. See Hazel Larsen Archer, interview by Walt Park, c. 1967–68, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
2. Larsen Archer, interview by Park.
3. The word *dymaxion* was coined from three words R. Buckminster Fuller often used: *dynamic*, *maximum*, and *ion*, or "dynamic, maximum tension." "Dymaxion Principles" were those structural principles found in nature; he invented additional words to describe these principles, such as *tensegrity* (tensional integrity), *synergetics* (how a system behaves unpredicted by its isolated parts), and *ephemeralization* (doing more with less). Larsen Archer further developed the modeling process using basic tensegrity structures such as the tetrahedron, octahedron, icosahedron, vector-equalibrium, and the closest packing of spheres to teach the principles "by which nature constructs herself." Her students were able to understand, through discovery while building these models, "systems thinking," i.e., that nothing exists in isolation. The whole is a "by-product," not of the parts themselves but of the relationships of the parts; when the relationship is not there, the whole ceases to exist. Erika Zarow, e-mail to the author, December 23, 2014. For more information about Fuller's ideas and work, consult the Buckminster Fuller Institute, www.bfi.org.
4. Larsen Archer, interview by Park.
5. Fuller's project at the college during his first summer there was to build a full-size geodesic dome. After weeks of work connecting venetian-blind remnant strips, the day came to make the final connection, at which time the dome was supposed to rise. This did not happen, and thus the dome was dubbed the Supine Dome. The following summer, Fuller returned to the college and was successful in his attempt to build a large dome, though it was different from the 1948 dome in materials and design.
6. R. Buckminster Fuller, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Confidential Report on Candidate for Fellowship, November 2, 1955, in *Hazel Larsen Archer: Black Mountain College Photographer* (Asheville, NC: Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 2006), 90.

Larsen's images of Merce Cunningham sailing through the air show her collaborative spirit. The contact sheets from the session reveal image after image of the dancer and choreographer, as if he were levitating, leaping exceptionally high, practically flying. The sequence is cinematic and exquisite. Cunningham later said, "Hazel Larsen was an intrinsic part of the Black Mountain experience."[7] Larsen so impressed the Black Mountain Board of Fellows with her photographic work in summer 1948 that in March of 1949 she was invited to become a lecturer in photography for the coming year.

As a teacher, Larsen encouraged self-discovery, letting students find their own way with her patient, careful guidance. "The teacher is an usher," she later observed.[8] Black Mountain College alumna Marie Tavroges Stilkind, who studied photography one-on-one with Larsen, recalls, "She started 'teaching' me gently and without lessons. Hazel appreciated my photos and pointed to the ones she particularly liked and would smile. She showed me the techniques, the craft and the composition she liked, but she did not tell me what I should do."[9] And Jacqueline Gourevitch, who took Larsen's photography class during the summer of 1950, remembers her to be "a wonderful teacher and an inspirational and unique human being." She recalls her strong emphasis on "close looking and fine printing."[10] Robert Rauschenberg was another of Larsen's talented photography students at Black Mountain.

For the summer session in 1951, Larsen organized a concentration on photography and invited instructors Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskind, and Arthur Siegel, all of whom were well on their way to becoming significant figures in the history of photography.[11] Notably, creative photography as a subject of study was then in its infancy in the United States. Among the students who enrolled for the session was poet Jonathan Williams, who had unsuccessfully tried to take Callahan's class at the Institute of Design in Chicago. Callahan told Williams that he would be teaching at Black Mountain College during the summer and that Williams should consider enrolling there. Williams attended the session, but ultimately he fell under the spell of Charles Olson, and his interest in photography shifted toward his interests in writing and publishing.[12] That year, Andy Oates, a dedicated student of Larsen's, was the college's first graduate in photography. His work was reviewed by outside examiner Edward Steichen, director of the Museum of Modern Art's Photography Department.

Perhaps Larsen's most sublime work is her series of photographs of Black Mountain's Quiet House doors. Designed and built by student Alex Reed and faculty member Molly Gregory, this simple one-room stone building was conceived to honor the memory of young Mark Dreier, the child of faculty member Theodore Dreier who was tragically killed in a vehicle accident on campus in 1941. Quiet House represented a place of solace, retreat, and renewal for this predominantly secular community. The simple wood doors, painted white with black handles and hinges, provided a revelatory surface for her meditative studies of light and shadow. The series of images carries a formal elegance that embodies Larsen's sense of the essence or life of a thing that can be felt but not seen.[13]

Larsen met her future husband, Charles Archer, at Black Mountain. They left the college community in 1953 and opened a photography studio in the nearby town of Black Mountain. In 1956, they moved west to Tucson, but before doing so she spent a year in Washington, DC, studying the Maya of Central America and spending time at the Library of Congress in the photographic archives of the Farm Security Administration.[14] Though she was widely published and achieved national recognition through a 1949 solo exhibition at the Photo League, which was reviewed in the *New York Times*, and a group show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1950, "5 Women Photographers," Larsen Archer stopped exhibiting her work after 1957.[15] She then turned her full attention to education and helping others to open their eyes, as she had at Black Mountain College.

Hazel Larsen Archer, contact sheet of Merce Cunningham dancing, n.d.
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

7. Merce Cunningham, quoted in ibid., cover.
8. Hazel Larsen Archer, untitled talk at the Black Mountain College Reunion, Camp Rockmont, Lake Eden, NC, October 1995, videotape, Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, Asheville, NC.
9. Marie Tavroges Stilkind, e-mail to the author, August 2, 2014.
10. Jacqueline Hermann Gourevitch, interview by Erin Dickey, May 30, 2014, DVD, Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center Oral History Project, Asheville, NC.
11. At the time, Callahan and Siegel were teaching at Chicago's Institute of Design. Siskind joined the ID faculty the following year.
12. The Jargon Society, founded by Jonathan Williams and David Ruff in a San Francisco Chinese restaurant just before Williams arrived at Black Mountain College in 1951, was an important small press that focused on Williams's interests—overlooked writers, photographers, and self-taught artists—and is a significant outgrowth of the college's history. The Jargon Society, including its inventory, is now a project of the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.
13. See Larsen Archer, interview with Park.
14. Larsen Archer, "Hazel Larsen Archer, Background Summary," undated. Private collection of Erika Zarow.
15. Ibid.

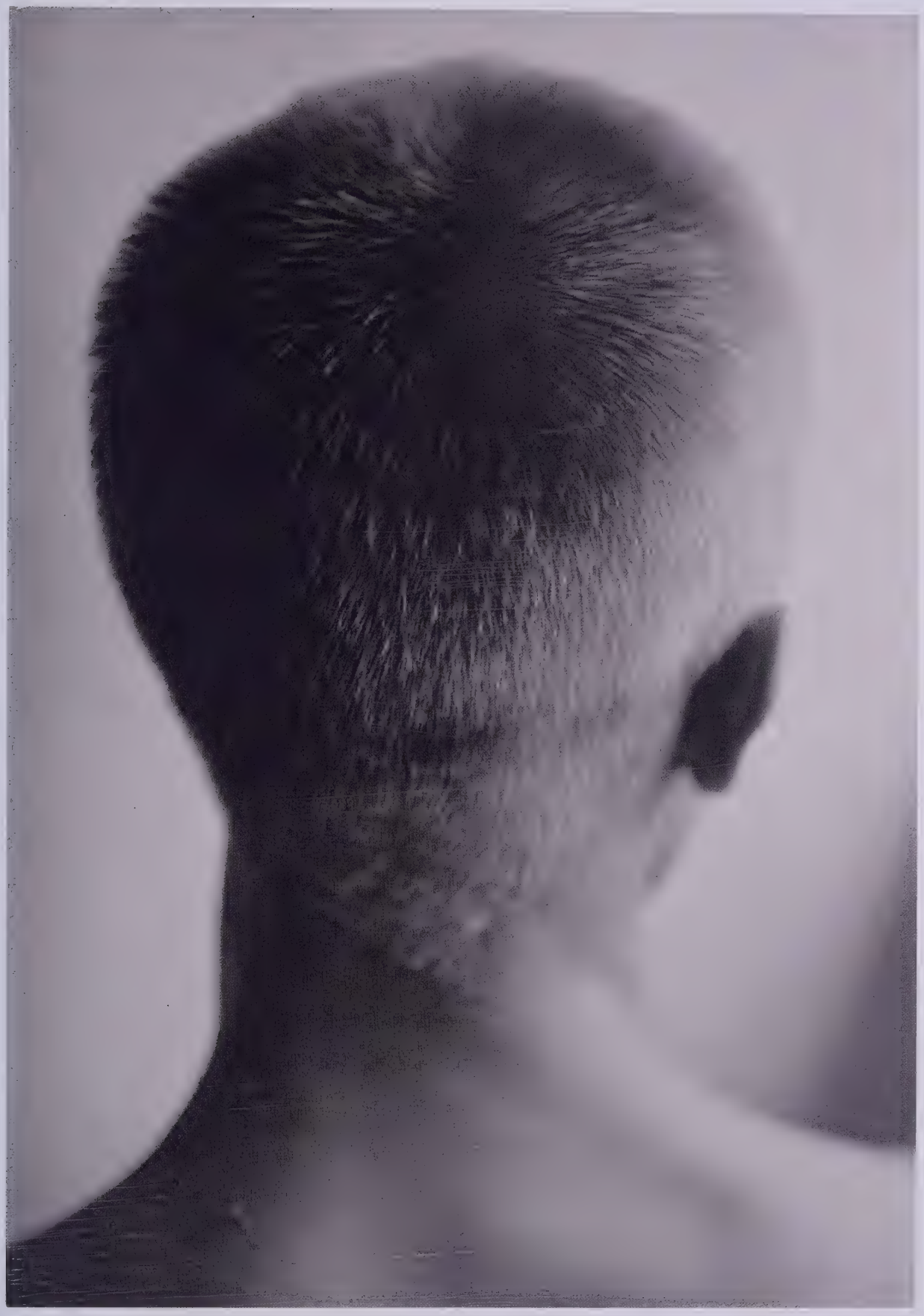
Hazel Larsen Archer, *Quiet House Doors*, 1948. Gelatin silver print, 9 ½ x 6 ⅝ inches.

Hazel Larsen Archer, *Minimum House, Black Mountain College*, 1948.
Gelatin silver print, 8 5/8 x 6 7/8 inches

Hazel Larsen Archer, *Minimum House, Black Mountain College*, 1948.
Gelatin silver print, 9 ½ x 6 ⅞ inches.

Hazel Larsen Archer. *Merce Cunningham*. c 1952–53
Gelatin silver print. 8 ¼ x 5 ⅞ inches

Hazel Larsen Archer, *Merce Cunningham*, c. 1952–53.
Gelatin silver print, 8 ¾ x 5 ⅞ inches.



Hazel Larsen Archer, *Ray Johnson*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 9 ¾ x 6 ⅞ inches.
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (from Portfolio I, 1952)*, 1952.
Gelatin silver print mounted on board, 3 ⅜ x 5 ⅝ inches.

Jacqueline Gourevitch, *Kenneth Noland*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 10 x 8 inches.

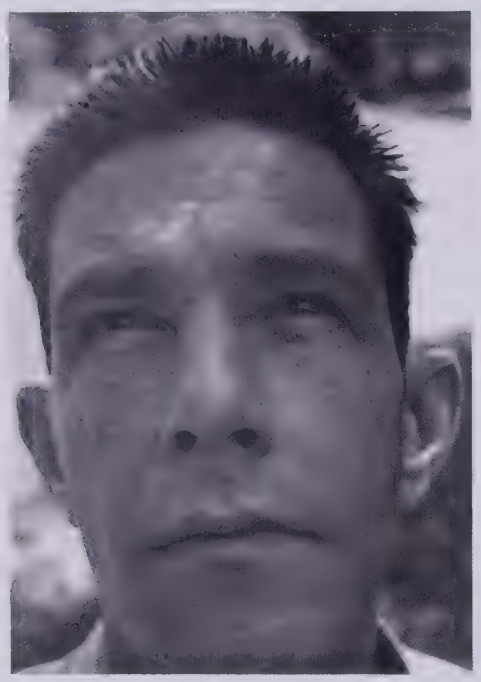
Jacqueline Gourevitch, *Staircase in the Studies Building with Mailbox*, 1950
Gelatin silver print, 9 5/8 x 6 1/2 inches.

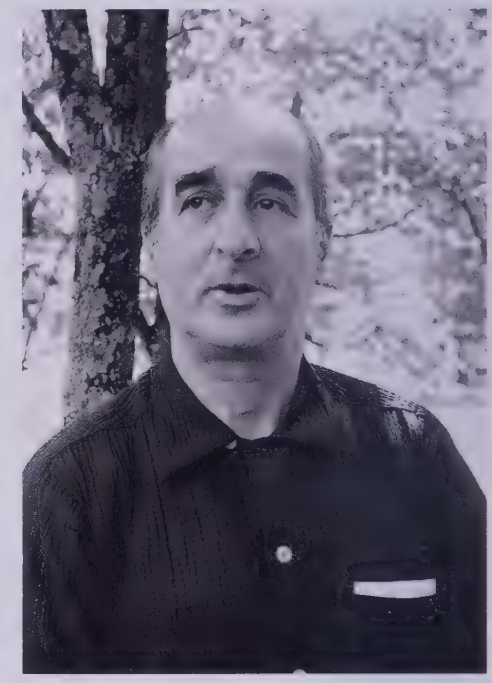
Jacqueline Gourevitch, *Chairs, Seminar Room, Studies Building*, 1950.
Gelatin silver print, 10 x 8 inches. Collection of the artist.

Stan VanDerBeek, *Untitled*, 1949–50/2007. Gelatin silver prints, 10 x 8 inches each.

MUSICAL COSMOPOLITANS AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE: JOHN CAGE, LOU HARRISON, AND STEFAN WOLPE

BRIGID COHEN





ft Hazel Larsen Archer, *John Cage*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 9 ⅜ x 6 ⅜ inches.
Lou Harrison, c. 1951. Photo by Jonathan Williams. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection.
ht Stefan Wolpe, n.d. Photo by Jonathan Williams. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection.

At midcentury, the students and faculty at Black Mountain College explored ideas of community that at once stopped short of and surpassed national ambitions. From his first days as permanent faculty, Charles Olson drew inspiration from Paul Goodman's call for artists to rehabilitate small-scale communal life after the "shell shock" of world war and nationalist genocide.[1] At the same time, strong internationalist currents on campus culminated in Olson's unrealized plan for Black Mountain to organize art activities in cities across the world, anticipating the antinationalist globalism of later politicized initiatives like Fluxus.[2]

Musical life at the college—fostered by John Cage, Lou Harrison, and Stefan Wolpe—played a special role in inspiring such cosmopolitan imaginings. As a performance medium, music calls out for gathering and collectivity. At the same time, its semiotic fluidity often admits all manner of cultural crossings. Cage, Harrison, and Wolpe—among the most committed explorers of cosmopolitan visions at Black Mountain—inspired Olson and others. In retrospect, the work of these composers intimates a full range of meanings that animate "cosmopolitanism" in the senses it has come to acquire in humanities scholarship—a notoriously contested concept that tends to pivot between vaunted moral aspiration and mundane daily practice, between community loyalty and distanced affiliations, and between privileged cultural access and dispossession.[3] Each composer held a distinctive notion of what it meant to be a "citizen of the world" in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Cage's cosmopolitanism drew from European Orientalist traditions alongside South Asian and Christian mystic sources.[4] At Black Mountain from 1948 onward, he enlisted music in moral, spiritual, and psychic self-improvement projects meant to radiate outward for social transformation. Following Carl Jung, Cage prized "integration of the personality" as an ultimate goal, which musicians and listeners could approach by emulating "Oriental" practices of nonattachment.[5] He persistently linked ethical ideas of disinterestedness, quietness, and open-mindedness: "a quiet mind is a mind that is free of its likes and dislikes . . . you can become open-minded, literally, by giving up your likes and dislikes."[6] Musical experience would thus ideally let more of the world into the solitary mind rather than simply gather individuals into a world of shared activity and emotion.[7] Aligned with this intention, *4'33"* (1952) primes "open-minded" listening by showcasing the chance environmental sounds always present in silence. And the electronic tape piece *Williams Mix* (1952; see page 55) juxtaposes and layers myriad sound samples, including Cage's personal "dislikes"—Beethoven and commercial mass media—his own negative reaction to which he may have sought to overcome through this method.[8] At Black Mountain, Cage argued that "good music" that opens the mind serves as a "guide to good living."[9] The search for "good living" becomes all the more urgent in the contemporary "random world situation,"[10] which includes everything from the "sheer materialist nonsense" of "modern industrialism" to affairs of war and peace.[11] Cage's cosmopolitanism, however, generally avoided questions of power and privilege during this period.

In contrast, Harrison's practice tended toward a more overt politics of leftist pacifism that intensified during the Cold War. Recalling the years before his 1951 appointment as musical director at Black Mountain, he explained, "There came a time in my life when I found myself revolted by the whole modern world. It was the atom bomb. It blew me apart. . . . The question was . . . [of] what to retrieve from the scattered fragments."[12] He responded by interrogating the fundamentals of his medium, searching for universals of human experience within disparate musical cultures across time and space. This project drew heavily from his involvement in both the Living Theater in New York and the civil rights movement, with its emphasis on integration and universalism.[13] At Black Mountain, Harrison sought "experiential, sensual, . . . intellectual realities" in what became a lifelong study of intonation systems alternative to the modern even-tempered scale, with a special focus on just intonation, ancient Greek music theory, and Balinese gamelan music.[14] Among other works, he composed his first piece that imitated the gamelan at Black Mountain ("Gamelan," in Suite for Violin, Piano, and Small Orchestra [1952]). He also wrote music for the multimedia work *Glyph* (1951), orchestrated for an eccentric, amateur ensemble of piano, bells, claves, and, electively, a gong and a tuning fork. This collaboration featured groundbreaking choreography by Katherine Litz, who entangled herself in a body sock; a painted backdrop by Ben Shahn inspired by Mayan glyphs and Chinese calligraphy; and poetry by Olson dealing with race, slavery, and community in the modern South.[15] The ambitiously transhistorical, transcultural poetics of this collaboration would have resonated deeply with Harrison's desire to "go back through history to find out where we went wrong or what could be preserved."[16]

By the time of his appointment as musical director in 1953, Wolpe's brand of cosmopolitanism had grown out of his history in leftist avant-garde movements in Weimar (such as the Bauhaus and agitprop theater) and his refugee

1. Libbie Rifkin, *Career Moves: Olson, Creeley, Zukovsky, Berrigan, and the American Avant-Garde* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 29. Paul Goodman, "Advance-Guard Writing 1900–1950," *Kenyon Review* 13, no. 3 (1951): 375–6.
2. Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 180.
3. See, for example, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006); *Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Pheng Cheah, *Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Bruce Robbins, *Perpetual War: Cosmopolitanism from the Viewpoint of Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
4. These sources include St. Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Campbell, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Meister Eckhart, Aldous Huxley, Carl Jung, and Gita Sarabhai. For a discussion of Satie's influences during this period, see Douglas Kahn, "John Cage: Silence and Silencing," *Musical Quarterly* 81 (1997): 556–98, esp. 563–68; David Wayne Patterson, "Appraising the Catchwords, c. 1942–1959: John Cage's Asian-Derived Rhetoric and the Historical Reference of Black Mountain College," PhD diss., Columbia University, 1996, 129.
5. John Cage, "A Composer's Confessions" (1948), in *John Cage Writer: Previously Uncollected Pieces*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Limelight Editions, 1993), 41. John Cage, "Defense of Satie," (1948) in *John Cage: An Anthology*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), 84. See also Kahn, 563–67.
6. Cage, "Esthetics," in *Conversing with Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Limelight Press, 1988), 231.
7. Kahn, "John Cage," 566.
8. Ibid., 578.
9. Cage, "Defense of Satie," 84.
10. Ibid.
11. Cage, "A Composer's Confessions," 39–43.
12. Virginia Madison Rathbun, "Lou Harrison and His Music," MA thesis, San Jose State University, 1976, 65. Quoted in Leta Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Composing a World: Lou Harrison, Musical Wayfarer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 179.
13. Miller and Lieberman, *Composing a World*, 178–79.
14. Ibid., 179.
15. For a discussion of the politics and poetics of this intermedial project, see Stephen Voyce, *Poetic Community: Avant-Garde Activism and Cold War Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 52–55.
16. Mary Emma Harris, "Interview of Lou Harrison," January 5, 1972, Aptos, CA. Quoted in Martin Brody, "The Scheme of the Whole: Black Mountain and the Course of American Modern Music," in *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, ed. Vincent Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 261.

experience in totalitarian and colonial settings in Germany and Palestine.[17] Dismissing the potential for any universal human experience, he sought to refine his and others' sensitivity to conditions of human plurality in redress for the violent erasures of difference he had witnessed. He treated music as a training ground for the cultivation of highly differentiated aesthetic experiences, which he hoped would enrich individuals' responsiveness to dilemmas of human difference in everyday life.[18] At Black Mountain, his texted music addressed questions of exile, dispossession, and violence—including his setting of Bertolt Brecht's *Good Woman From Szechuan* (1953) and his song "David's Lament over Jonathan" (1954). He described his music as a "testament" to survival and transformations in migration. In keeping with this, Wolpe's Piece for Oboe, Cello, Percussion, and Piano (1954) features a montage-like blend of allusions to disparate music from his past, from Weimar-era popular music to Second Viennese School idioms to Arab classical music.[19] In his multimedia lecture-performances at Black Mountain, he repeatedly exhorted listeners to practice a "will to connect": "If you turn away your eyes, you don't see death, and from some further distances no cries are heard, and the confusions and the short circuits make it difficult to hinge things together."[20] At his most hopeful, he found in Black Mountain a "shelter" providing "protection and rest" during the Red Scare and an "intensity of involvements" bringing redemption to his history.[21]

Given their divergent notions of cosmopolitanism, Cage, Harrison, and Wolpe sometimes entered into heated dialogues with one another about questions of self-expression, cultural choice, cross-cultural appropriation, community, power, history, responsibility, psychology, perception, musical form, and the basic materials of music. Speaking of their exchanges, Wolpe confided, "Very often I also feel we are working within similar orbits *on different sides*, which is alright with me." He followed with a central question posed in imperfect English: "How open, alert interested is one (are you) in what other people are doing and if (provided) they do entirely different things how much is one capable of following them and be[ing] concerned with them and gets meaning from them and allows them to have meaning?"[22] Ultimately, all three composers saw the agonistic encounters at Black Mountain as holding the potential, in microcosm, to model strategies for responding with care to conditions of plurality in the wider world.

Katherine Litz in performance of *The Glyph* at Black Mountain College, 1951. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

18. Brigid Cohen, "Diasporic Dialogues in Mid-Century New York: Stefan Wolpe, George [illegible], Hannah Arendt, and the Historiography of Displacement," *Journal of the Society for [illegible]*

19. Brigid Cohen, "Limits of National History: Stefan Wolpe, Yoko Ono, and Dilemmas of [illegible]"

20. Stefan Wolpe, "Any Bunch of Notes: A Lecture" (1953), ed. Austin Clarkson, *Perspectives [illegible]*

21. [illegible] to Netty Simons, June 6, 1955, Netty Simons Collection, New York Public [illegible]

22. [illegible] Netty Simons, [illegible] Netty Simons Collection, New York [illegible]

Ossip Zadkine, *Femme Assise* (*Seated Woman*), 1941. Terra-cotta, 13 5/8 x 7 x 9 inches.

Jean Varda, *Abstraction*, n.d. Watercolor, cardboard, newsprint, and paper on board, 21 ⅜ x 25 ⅝ inches

Ilya Bolotowsky, *Upright in Gold and Violet*, 1945. Oil on canvas, 41 x 21 7/8 inches.

TEXTURE OF THE SOUTH: ROLAND HAYES AND INTEGRATION AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

BRYAN BARCENA

Roland Hayes in concert at Black Mountain College, 1945. Photo by John Campbell.

Roland Hayes with his wife, Helen Mann, and daughter, Afrika, summer 1945. Photo by Margaret W. Peterson.

Student Mary Parks at the 1946 Summer Art Institute. Photo by Nancy Newhall.

The largest audience ever to gather at Black Mountain College assembled for a performance by African-American tenor Roland Hayes in the summer of 1945. By this time, the gifted vocalist and composer was entering the twilight years of his career, his voice well worn from overperformance and near-constant globetrotting. Hayes's spiraling trajectory led the Georgia native and son of a slave to seek fame first in the North, then in Europe in the face of limited interest and racism at home, and finally to a successful and lucrative international career.[1] No better embodiment of the fruits of exchange between European classicism and American vernacular culture existed than in the person of Hayes, who throughout his career paired classical arias with the Southern folk songs and spirituals of his youth, deftly negotiating and contrasting the disparate forms.[2] The eclectic program at Black Mountain College that balmy evening—a selection of operas by Monteverdi, Haydn, Mozart, and Schubert, followed by Negro spirituals and Creole and Afro-Brazilian songs—was praised as "beautiful beyond words" and as "one of the greatest moments in Black Mountain's history."[3] The heterogeneity of the program that evening reflected the racially mixed audience; it is estimated that of the approximately four hundred guests that filled the hall and spilled out onto the porch that evening, thirty to forty were African American.[4] The recital marked the apex of the integration "experiment" at Black Mountain College, one that was bound to its identity as a progressive liberal arts college located in the resolutely conservative Jim Crow South.[5]

Hayes's invitation to perform at the 1945 Summer Music Institute formed part of the didactic and prescriptive efforts to foster dialogue with the college's neighbors, as well as to provide students with an education in what music professor Edward Lowinsky described as "the texture of the South, the mind of the South, and the temper of the South."[6] Hayes's repertoire of the uniquely Southern black spirituals and folk songs would have undoubtedly been a draw to local residents, providing a unique moment of exchange between the music performed at Black Mountain—until this point decidedly European and Caucasian—and the college's immediate community. Theodore Dreier stated that Black Mountain was "the only place in the south where [Hayes] would be accepted completely as a member of the college community without any discrimination."[7]

The drive toward desegregation began during the first year of the college's founding. On the occasion of a visit by a black student in 1933, the faculty debated whether to house

1. For a full biography of Roland Hayes, see Robert C. Hayden, *Singing for All People: Roland Hayes, A Biography* (1989; repr., Boston: Select Publications, 1995).
2. Many of the folk songs that Hayes sang had never been recorded, and it was Hayes who first arranged them for orchestral accompaniment. The recording *My Songs: Aframerican Relıgious Folk Songs Arranged and Interpreted*, released in 1948, collected these songs.
3. Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (1972; repr., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 215; Mary Feininger, quoted in Mary Emma Harris, *Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 101.
4. Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 215.
5. The integration effort is often referred to as an "experiment" in much of the literature on Black Mountain College, suggesting the effort could either succeed or fail. The use of this term by the faculty seems to suggest that the push to integrate was one that could be abandoned if the repercussions were to be found untenable.
6. Edward Lowinsky, quoted in W. R. Wunsch, letter to John Evarts, April 20, 1944, 2. Black Mountain College Papers, vol. 2, box 8, "Evarts, John," Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
7. Theodore Dreier, to Cynthia Carr, April 5, 1945, PC.1956, the Theodore and Barbara Loines Dreier Black Mountain College Collection, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC. Quoted in Micah Wilkins, "Social Justice at BMC Before the Civil Rights Age: Desegregation, Racial Inclusion, and Racial Equality at BMC," *Black Mountain College Studies*, no. 6 (Summer 2014).

the student on campus. The decision was made to find him legal accommodations in town.[8] The tone of this stopgap resolution informed policy for the ensuing decade. In the name of caution, the question of whether to integrate the student body was tabled; it was thought the fragile constitution of the burgeoning college could not bear the scrutiny that breaking local protocol would elicit. Majority opinion felt it safer to respect regional mores, as the college had not been founded to advance that cause.[9] Eventually, during the spring of 1944, a series of meetings incited by new faculty, who felt a personal and institutional responsibility to foster the cause of racial equality, caused latent tensions to boil over. The philanthropically minded faculty, spearheaded by Clark Foreman, Eric Bentley, Edward Lowinsky, and Robert Wunsch, butted heads with those who thought it would be prudent to continue to avoid the fraught topic. Moreover, the "Negro issue" became the foil for a fear that the incoming cohort of faculty was eroding the principles of the community and surreptitiously organizing a coup to wrest power from Josef Albers, Dreier, and others.[10] The argument that there existed an ideal moment to make the "radical departure from Southern procedure" continued to pervade the discussion and delay efforts at integration.[11] This trepidation was no doubt born from the anxiety that integration would spur the ire of the local Southern community and that the repercussions of this unavoidable culture clash would prove violent.[12] As Wunsch put it in a letter to John Evarts in 1944, to integrate would be tantamount to "declaring open warfare against the South."[13]

The fear that local white racists would hire mobs to disturb the peace at the college was not unfounded. Black Mountain resident Robert "Buncombe Bob" Reynolds, senator of North Carolina from 1932 to 1945, was elected on a blatantly xenophobic "America for Americans" platform that included registering and fingerprinting all aliens, halting all immigration, banishing all foreign "isms," and deporting all alien criminals and "undesirables."[14] Incidents throughout the college's history hardened the feeling that the Southern environment was toxic. Episodes of intolerance ranged from two female students being jailed and humiliated on trumped up prostitution charges while hitchhiking in Tennessee to Wunsch's arrest and subsequent departure from the college in 1945 for so-called crimes against nature. Hayes himself was jailed and beaten in 1942 when he objected to his wife and daughter being asked to leave the whites-only area of a shoe store in Georgia.[15] Nonetheless, despite the specter of repression, the college pressed forward.

Angry villagers with pitchforks never materialized, however; the lack of furor over the integrated audience the night of Hayes's performance relieved fears of reprisal and further propelled the school's burgeoning effort to court black students.[16] A rapid succession of actions toward racial integration and involvement in the civil rights struggle followed. Although one black female student, Alma Stone Williams, had been an invited guest to the 1944 Summer Music Institute, the first full-time black student, Sylvesta Martin, was admitted in the spring term of 1945, and in the fall the first full-time black faculty member, Percy H. Baker, was hired. Jacob Lawrence was invited as a painting instructor and was accompanied by his wife, the painter Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, in the summer of 1946. By 1949, five more African Americans had been added to the faculty roster, as well as another nine students. Much of this push was student driven, demanding that "as many Negro students as our capacity would permit be admitted immediately."[17] The progress was further catalyzed by the financial resources provided by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which underwrote the tuition of the black students, the salaries of black faculty, and a grant to support Hayes's participation in the Summer Institute.

By the end of the 1940s, the departures of Bentley (in 1944), Foreman (in 1944), Wunsch (in 1945), Heinrich Jalowetz (in 1946), Lowinsky (in 1947), and Dreier (in 1949) dried the reservoir of figures who might lobby for further black admissions. Further, the college's inability to gain accreditation would prove one of the key deterrents to increasing black enrollment; given the already difficult access to higher education, many black students likely found it foolhardy to enroll in a college where a degree was not offered during the 1940s (not to mention any job certainty). The liquidation of the Rosenwald Fund in 1948 evaporated the financial support of desegregation. Despite these deterrents, the black students who did choose to enroll found the experience unlike anything else available in the South. Speaking much later, Alma Stone Williams praised the opportunity: "I could receive a mountaintop experience on a true southern mountain. . . . I was at home among these people: students and teachers, Northern and Southern, Americans and foreigners. . . . The arts brought us together."[18]

Black Mountain's limited success in wooing black students does little to invalidate the historical significance of its achievement. For despite the many fits and starts of the integration project at the college, Black Mountain was the first all-white Southern college to admit a black student, a full decade before *Brown v. Board of Education* and the federally enforced desegregation of Southern colleges in the early 1960s.[19]

8. The Board of Fellows did not consult the student body in their decision to house the black student off campus. As a result, a group of students crafted a petition demanding a meeting, as they felt that the board's failure to involve the students in the decision-making process, as well as the resolution of the issue, did not reflect the college's institutional mission. See Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 68–69.

9. Ibid., 68.

10. See ibid., 172–211, for a detailed discussion of the ramifications of the debates surrounding "the Negro issue."

11. Ibid., 180.

12. In a summary of the debates that raged on integration, Clark Foreman lists both negative and positive effects that integration might have had on students, as well as on the relationship with Black Mountain. See Black Mountain College Papers, vol. 2, box 24, "Discussions on Admissions of Negro Students," Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.

13. Wunsch, letter to Evarts, April 20, 1944.

14. See Julian M. Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob: The Life and Times of Robert Rice Reynolds* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

15. Hayden, *Singing for All People*, 58.

16. Although nothing official was recorded, there were some unsubstantiated claims that fires in the surrounding woods were lit in protest of the admittance of black students.

17. Edward Lowinsky, letter to Fred Wale, December 17, 1946, quoted in Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 216.

18. Sebastian Matthews, "Opening Doors: Alma Stone Williams' 1944 Integration of Black Mountain College," *Urban News Asheville*, February 7, 2008, accessed November 3, 2014, http://theurbannews.com/our-town/2008/opening-doors-alma-stone-williams-1944-integration-of-black-mountain-college.

19. See "Black Mountain College: A Pioneer in Southern Racial Integration," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 54 (Winter 2006–7), 46–48.

Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, *Bayou*, 1941. Gouache on paper, 12 ½ x 20 inches.

JACOB LAWRENCE
Watchmaker

BRYAN BARCENA

In spite of the formal and philosophical disparities in their approaches to painting, Josef Albers extended Jacob Lawrence an invitation to teach during the 1946 Summer Art Institute. Their meeting would spur Lawrence to redouble his focus on line, form, shape, color, and texture in the service of visualizing the narratives of black America. The Harlem Renaissance painter's signature brand of Cubist-inspired figuration would tread a new, more analytic path as a result of his encounter with Albers's economical approach to form and color-driven prescriptions. From this juncture forward, Lawrence considered himself a direct descendant of the Bauhaus, crediting Albers as "one of the great teachers of our time," and the only figure outside of the Harlem community who exerted a lasting influence on his work.[1]

Lawrence's newly catalyzed relationship with color is evident in *Watchmaker*, from 1946. The painter employs his mature style to manifest a bold, figurative portrait of a craftsman at work. The anatomy of the titular figure is constructed in swaths of flat primary pigments; the torso, draped in a cerulean blue candy-striped shirt and sprouting trunk-like limbs, appears monolithic, dominating the frame. Thick appendages give way to oversize hands culminating in fingers finely defined by slender red lines. The left hand holds a pincer-like grasp on a watch body, while the right limps down delicately, coalescing into the fine point of tweezers that pierce the center of the watch. The figure's oversize head and mask-like face twist at an odd angle, pivoting to align the monocled right eye with a work surface strewn with gears, wires, and pins. The irresolute architecture of space within the painting is equally destabilized and dynamic—blue, yellow, and red ovoid clocks float above the figure; the worktable slopes away from the viewer as the uniformity of green wall behind the figure is broken by horizontal lines.

Lawrence's visual investigations of the dynamics of skill were no doubt inspired by his return to civilian life following wartime tenure in the US Coast Guard. The "carpenter Cubism" of the laborer paintings reveals the young painter's interest in understanding dedication to craft as career.[2] The watchmaker's clumsy posture and awkward positioning belie the careful coordination required to perform his trade. Using angular geometry, Lawrence traces an invisible line down the center of the frame—both viewer and figure's gaze travels from eye down to arm, hand, and finally tool, emphasizing a hyper focus on the task at hand. Of his interest in the tool, he writes, "We pick it up and it's so perfect, it's so utilitarian, so aesthetic, that we turn it, we look at it. . . . I always think of the tool as an extension of the hand."[3] The tools of the craftsman's trade—in this case, the tweezers and monocle—are representative of a bridging of the haptic divide between tactile and visual concentration; their presence underscores the hand-eye choreography performed by the craftsman. Moreover, the clocks in the background—all indicating disparate times—exacerbate the feeling of hours spent toiling beneath the industrial lamp, the spinning hands of the clocks alluding to time drifting away as the artisan focuses on his immutable task. Lawrence continued his inquiry of the use of tools in subsequent cycles of works, rendering Harlem craftsmen such as shoemakers, steelworkers, barbers, cabinet makers, and seamstresses well into the 1990s.[4]

Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, summer 1946. Photo by Beaumont Newhall.

1. Jacob Lawrence, interview by Carroll Greene, October 26, 1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; http://aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-jacob-lawrence-11490.
2. The phrase "carpenter Cubism" is borrowed from Robert Pincus-Witten, "Jacob Lawrence: Carpenter Cubism," *Artforum* 13, no. 1 (September 1974): 66–67.
3. Jacob Lawrence, quoted in Patricia Hills and Peter T. Nesbett, *Jacob Lawrence: Thirty Years of Prints (1963–1993): A Catalogue Raisonné* (Seattle: Francine Seders Gallery, in association with the University of Washington Press, 1994), 36.
4. See Marta Reid Stewart, "Women in the Works: A Psychobiographical Interpretation of Jacob Lawrence's Portrayal of Women as Icons of Black Modernism," *Notes in the History of Art* 24, no. 4 (Summer 2005): 56–66.

Jacob Lawrence, *Watchmaker*, 1946. Tempera and graphite on paper, 30 ½ x 21 ½ inches.

Fannie Hillsmith, *The Desk*, 1946. Oil on canvas, 37 ¼ x 26 ⅜ inches

Robert Motherwell, *Untitled*, 1943. Watercolor and ink on paperboard, 15 ⅛ x 11 ⅛ inches.

LEO AMINO

Carnivorous Plant #22

BRYAN BARCENA

When Japanese émigré Leo Amino arrived at Black Mountain College in July 1946, he found the organic forms of his sculptures echoed in the rural landscape. The son of an ikebana artist and calligrapher, Amino emulated the natural world throughout his career, creating expressive compositions rife with bulbous appendages, fluid plunging hollows, skeletal armatures, and spindly protrusions. Amino immigrated to the United States in 1929, and although he considered himself mostly self-taught, he studied "direct-carve" techniques from Chaim Gross during a brief, but decisive, period at the American Artists School in New York in 1937. During the 1940s, Amino's wood sculptures wavered in style between the anatomical abstraction of Henry Moore (whose sculptures he encountered during a trip to London in 1938) and the total abstraction of Isamu Noguchi, whom he exhibited alongside at the 1939 World's Fair.

The course catalogue for the 1946 Summer Art Institute at Black Mountain College promoted Amino's class as "a critical analysis of abstract sculpture and its application, as well as experimental work in new materials."[1] Prior to his arrival at Black Mountain in 1946, Amino had begun experimenting with polyester or plastic resin, an industrial material he first encountered during his time as a translator for the US Navy during World War II. He began by whittling away at chunks of the hardened plastic, but later learned to cast it while still molten, simultaneously infusing it with color and texture. Despite his interest in this new material, there was no facility at the college where casting it could occur. As a result, Amino continued to create dramatic animal and plant-like forms that exploited the knots, grain, and texture of repurposed timber. Although Amino found the community at the college "cliquish and incestuous," he relished the freedom to pursue his own practice, as well as the loose structure between teachers and students.[2]

Between Amino's first visit to the college and his return in 1950 to teach sculpture once again, his interest had fully pivoted from natural materials to the man-made, from the hewn to the cast, and from the intrinsic to the additive. From this period forward, Amino manifested inventive plastic sculptures, adapting the biomorphic abstraction of his earlier wood carvings to take advantage of the unique properties of the plastic resin. *Carnivorous Plant #22* (1952), an amber-tinted scythe-like form, showcases the formal possibilities afforded by the new material. The menacing, pincer-like appendages and sharp protrusions of the outer form coordinate with the blood-red splotches embedded within the inner volume to emphasize the predatory character of the titular flora. The light traveling through the sculpture refracts and reflects the interior, providing the viewer with an aquarium-like vista of the organic figure's bowels. Here, the sculptor has taken full advantage of the ability to intervene directly into the interior of the sculpture—inserting wires, dyes, mesh, and wood sticks throughout the plastic during the casting process. By suspending these extraneous elements within the substrate, Amino created what he referred to as "shapes within a shape, textures within a texture."[3]

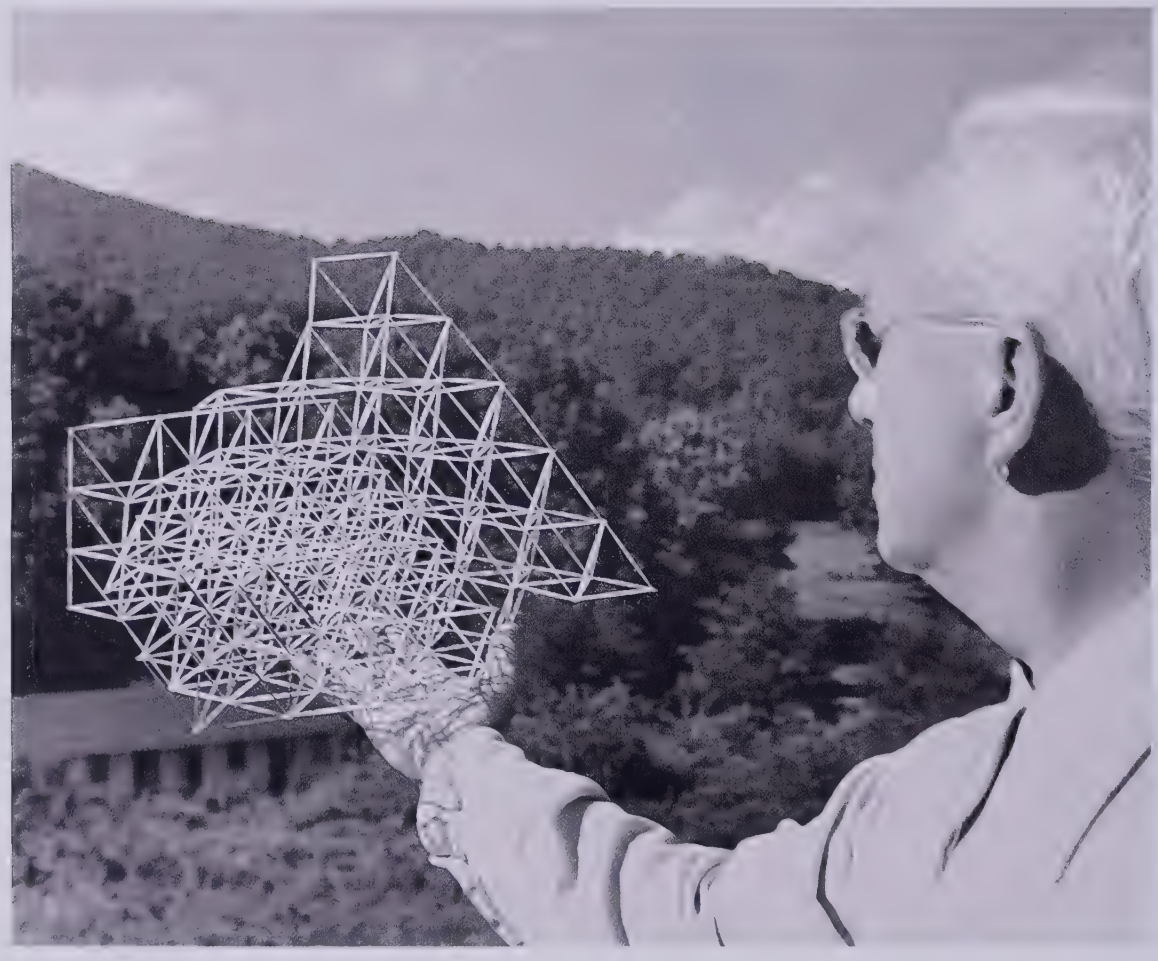
top Leo Amino with wood sculpture on the deck of the Studies Building, 1946 Summer Art Institute. Photo by Beaumont Newhall.
bottom Leo Amino and students carving sculptures under the Studies Building, n.d. Photo by Beaumont Newhall.

1. "Art Institute, Summer 1946," *Black Mountain College Bulletin-Newsletter* 4, no. 3 (April 1946): 5. Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center Collection, D. H. Ramsey Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina, Asheville.
2. Leo Amino, quoted in *Black Mountain College: Sprouted Seeds, An Anthology of Personal Accounts*, ed. Mervin Lane (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 198.
3. Gregory Gilbert, *Leo Amino: Sculpture 1945–1974* (New Brunswick, NJ: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum Press, 1985), 6.

Leo Amino, *Carnivorous Plant #22*, 1952. Polyester resin, wire, netting, and thread on wood base, 23 ⅛ x 9 ¼ x 6 ⅞ inches.

SUMMER SESSION 1948

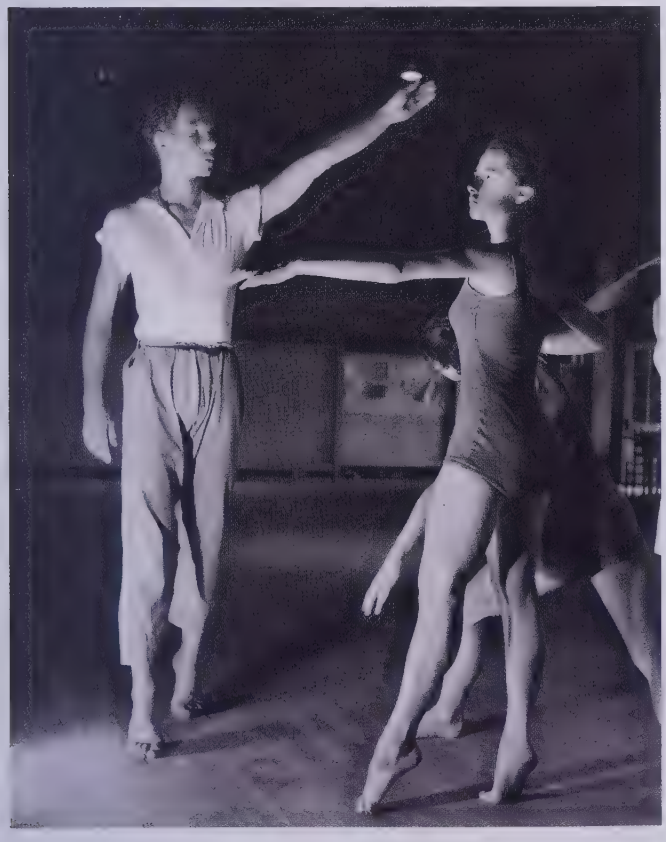
EVA DÍAZ



R. Buckminster Fuller with model. Photo by Masato Nakagawa.

top: R. Buckminster Fuller, Hazel Larsen Archer, and Kenneth Snelson, summer 1949.
bottom: Nancy Newhall, *Buckminster Fuller*, 1948/1990. Gelatin silver print, 7 5/8 x 9 1/2 inches.

Clemens Kalischer, *Merce Cunningham Dance Class*, 1948. Gelatin silver print, 14 x 11 inches.



With an average of forty students enrolled each year during its twenty-four-year existence, Black Mountain College was undeniably small. Its celebrated summer sessions and Summer Art Institutes, though, lured many to its rural Appalachian location—normally well off the beaten track for visitors—changing the character not only of the Buncombe County environs but also of its own curriculum, faculty, and student body. Much of the college's vaunted reputation rests on the fame (or future fame) of the visitors who came for those sessions.

In 1948 a "galaxy of talent" (to use student Ray Johnson's phrase) was present: Josef and Anni Albers, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, R. Buckminster Fuller, and Willem de Kooning formed the core of a rotating group of about twenty faculty in session from July through August, which also included artist Richard Lippold and photography historian Beaumont Newhall.[1] They were joined by about seventy-five painting, sculpture, and theater students, including Ruth Asawa, Elaine de Kooning, Joseph Fiore, Elizabeth and W. Pete Jennerhahn, Ray Johnson, Hazel Larsen Archer, Kenneth Noland, Arthur Penn, Kenneth Snelson, and Paul and Vera Williams.

For his first-ever teaching appointment, Fuller arrived in western North Carolina in 1948 in a three-wheel motor home filled with energetic geometry models. While at the college, he delivered marathon lectures on topics ranging from global resource management to industrialization by way of military innovation and snuck in asides that introduced, for example, "our dear friend, the hypotenuse."[2] He quickly won an ardent following among the student body.

When the college's rector, Josef Albers, invited Cage and Cunningham to come to Black Mountain College that summer, they were warned that the administration only had funds to cover train fare and other travel expenses. The composer and choreographer were game anyway—Cage recounting that "once at Black Mountain there was no bed for me to sleep on. So I slept on the floor."[3] (Cage does not mention where Cunningham slept. They were pretty well closeted.)

Cage's luggage included all eighteen extant scores by French composer Erik Satie, as well as the script to Satie's only play, *The Ruse of Medusa* (1913). In addition to working as an accompanist to Cunningham, Cage staged evening recitals of Satie's work, prefaced by short speeches explaining its import. In one of these introductions, he infuriated many by denouncing the centrality of Beethoven and the German harmonic tradition—held in great esteem by his audience, many of them *Bauhaüslers*—and instead lauding Satie's emphasis on duration.

Cage's popular production of the play mended fences, casting Fuller, Cunningham, and Elaine de Kooning in a slapstick spectacular overseen by student and future film director Arthur Penn. Sets were designed by Willem de Kooning, Ray Johnson, and Ruth Asawa, among others.[4] The play was

1. See Ray Johnson, "Norman Soloman's Doberman Interviews Ray Johnson" (c. 1968), Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, NC.
2. Elaine de Kooning, quoting R. Buckminster Fuller. De Kooning recollected, "Bucky's eyes had us all mesmerized. They were, to us [his students at Black Mountain in the summer of 1948], the eyes of a visionary, a saint, all-comprehending, all-forgiving. We loved him, and hung on every word." "De Kooning Memories," in *Black Mountain College: Sprouted Seeds: An Anthology of Personal Accounts*, ed. Mervin Lane (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 247.
3. John Cage, interview with Martin Duberman, 31. Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
4. De Kooning used what he called a "guild secret" trompe-l'oeil technique he learned as a teenager in Holland. Quoted in John Elderfield, et al., *De Kooning: A Retrospective* (New York Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 61.

Clemens Kalischer, *Merce Cunningham in* The Ruse of Medusa, 1948. Gelatin silver print, 10 x 8 inches

characterized by pun-heavy dialogue and unrelated musical interludes danced by a "mechanical monkey, played by Cunningham."

Cage admired Satie because he did not attempt to organize events so much as to accept ambient environmental noises, what Satie had called "furniture" music.[5] In his study of Satie that summer, Cage was alerted to the seemingly paradoxical possibility of staging indeterminate outcomes in performance events, a model of experimentation he continued to hone in his subsequent visits to the college. As he wrote, "The word 'experimental' is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success or failure, but simply as an act the outcome of which is unknown."[6] Despite their quite disparate areas of expertise, Cage and Fuller forged a lifelong friendship that summer, thanks to their shared concern with modes of experimentation that embraced unexpected outcomes.

Fuller's interest in this type of experimentation was on full view that summer when he attempted to erect his first geodesic dome. One damp morning, after an extensive series of (pre-computer-era) calculations, dozens of cheap, flexible, commercially available venetian-blind slats were assembled as the dome's armature. The dome, predictably, failed to rise, and was good-naturedly called the Supine Dome.[7] According to Fuller, though he was aware that the venetian blinds needed to be doubled-up in order to have sufficient strength and tensile capability to elevate the dome, he decided to push ahead anyway to demonstrate that materials could be gradually built up to construct economically efficient buildings. Lightness was a prime feature of the dome's design: "I want to build a building that [people are] not afraid of having . . . collapse because it's so light it can't hurt anybody, it's like confetti. . . . So you start with this supine thing, and then keep fortifying until . . . it's standing up."[8] What the Supine Dome most decisively illustrated was Fuller's belief that such tactical failures are an inextricable part of any experimental method, and are indeed welcome as part of a dynamic process of educational risk. The success or failure of a single dome was less important than the lessons learned as part of an overall design strategy.

The dialogue that began at Black Mountain College between Cage and Fuller—who, along with Cunningham, had breakfast together daily—produced a fantasy "finishing school": "We would finish anything. In other words, we would really break down all of the conventional ways of approaching school."[9] That dialogue also points to what became a fault line in the story of Black Mountain College: that is, a pervasive sense that famous "outsiders" and events like the Summer Institutes came to overshadow the rest of the college community.[10]

While the roll call of the college's notable participants now suggests that successful visitors were imported en masse from the big city, it is largely because they went on to achieve such success after their time at Black Mountain. As Cage recalled, "None of us at that time, you see, had any power or influence on the New York scene. Not even Bill de Kooning."[11] Black Mountain wasn't merely a pit stop; it was a formative experience.

Yet if Black Mountain College offered shelter and respite, it was also a place where productive frictions played out. Its diverse faculty found ways to collaborate across disciplines, but it also hosted intellectual and artistic conflict. If the story of Cage and Fuller is of an unlikely friendship,

Theodore Dreier, Albert Lanier, and Elaine de Kooning holding up the Supine Dome, 1948. Photo by Beaumont Newhall.

it is also a story of lines drawn. The open-ended methods of experimentation these men embraced stood in sharp contrast to Josef Albers's more systematic model of experimentation by way of the careful testing of perceptual variation, and in even sharper contrast to the expressionistic tendencies of Willem de Kooning, who labored on his breakthrough abstraction *Asheville* that summer by endlessly scraping it down and building it back up.

De Kooning, like Fuller, was popular on campus. He became deeply involved with his students, and soon after his arrival he began to sow seeds of resistance to the notion that studying art was necessary at all. According to his wife, Elaine, who was also in residence that summer, by the end of his time at Black Mountain,

> Bill had also become deeply involved with his students. Too involved, Albers thought. He said to Bill at the end of the summer, "You had ten students. Six of them are leaving the College to go to New York City this September. Do you know anything about it?" "Sure," said Bill. "I told them if they wanted to be artists, they should quit school and come to New York and get a studio and start painting." Albers seemed not to take this amiss. When he was appointed chairman of the Art Department at Yale two years later, Bill was the first artist to be hired to teach there.[12]

The expressionist drift away from pedagogy at Black Mountain's summer session is somehow unsurprising given the individualist bent of New York School painters; nonetheless, de Kooning and the college in general greatly influenced such Black Mountain students as Pat Passlof, Joseph Fiore, and Raymond Spillenger, all of whom took his advice and moved to New York.

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5. John Cage, "On the Music of Erik Satie," in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, CT Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 76.
6. John Cage, "Experimental Music: Doctrine," in ibid., 13.
7. As Fuller said, "I called it the Supine Dome." Fuller, interview with Duberman, 14
8. Ibid.,15 and 16.
9. Fuller, interviewed by Mary Emma Harris, 34. Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
10. For example, Clement Greenberg, recommended to the college faculty by Willem de Kooning, taught there in 1950. Though he credited the students with impressive intensity, he ultimately "felt that not much art came out of Black Mountain (only some famous names)." Mary Emma Harris, quoting from her interview with Clement Greenberg, in *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 214
11. Cage, interview with Duberman, 8.
12. De Kooning, "De Kooning Memories."

R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER

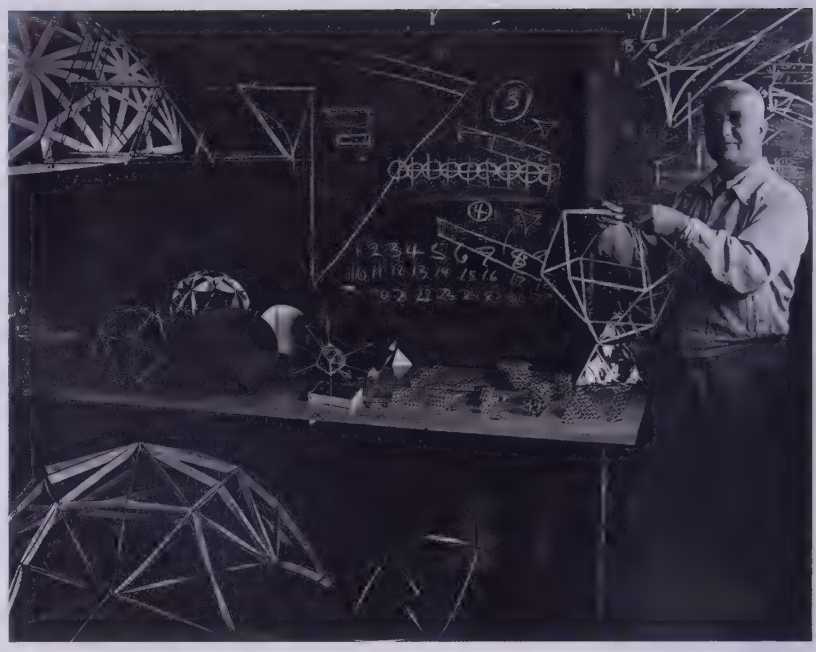
Great Circle Sphere Model

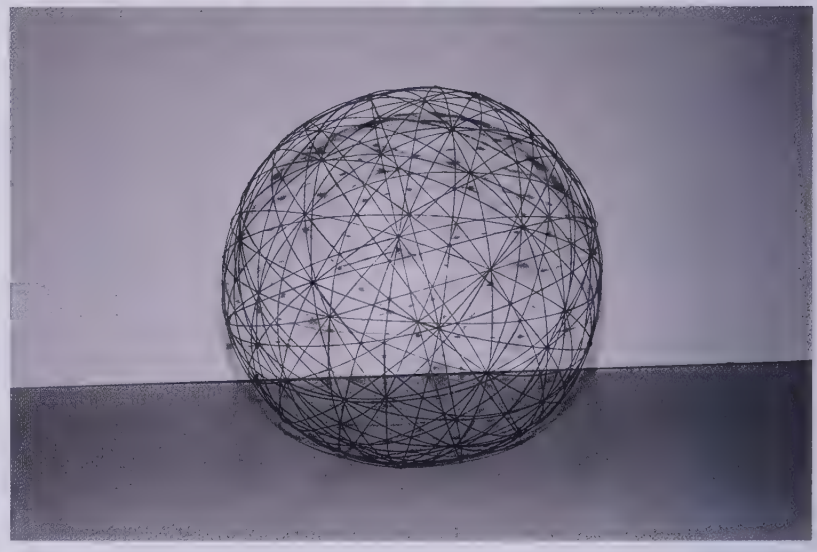
BRYAN BARCENA

Upon arriving at Black Mountain College, R. Buckminster Fuller immediately directed a group of students to unload the items in his gleaming aluminum trailer. What sprung forth was a treasure trove of space-age, origami-like objects—intricate geometric models of tetrahedrons, dodecahedrons, icosahedrons, web-like domes of all sizes, and crystal pyramids. The talismans were put to use as props for a theatrical diatribe on the impending end of "the age of the square." Despite what was surely a grueling drive from New York, Fuller rallied that evening, delivering a rousing three-hour lecture that set the tone for his time at the college. The inventor-cum-engineer-cum-architect energetically detailed the framework for his vision of a geodesic future, delivered using his characteristic vocabulary of eloquent techno jargon. To the students and faculty in attendance, Fuller must have seemed a mix of traveling salesman, sage soothsayer, eccentric futurist, and perhaps even huckster. Richard Lippold remarked that it was like "meeting Zoroaster speaking Islamic," while Merce Cunningham felt "immediate absolute adoration and love" due to the "grandeur with which he saw things."[1] Student and collaborator Kenneth Snelson recalled that the mystic professor was able to convince the students to "arrive logically at illogical conclusions."[2] Once the models were transferred to his studio the space resembled a cabinet of curiosities transformed into a veritable alchemical laboratory of applied mathematics.

The aluminum *Great Circle Sphere Model* (n.d.), one of several prototypes for the domes which were to be constructed during his two summers at the college, illustrates the basic principles of geodesic design: a spherical network of thin, flat, overlapping circles distributing force evenly across the surface, enclosing an interior volume without the need for inner bracing. The model was no doubt created as a didactic tool, providing a palpable manifestation of the vectors, angles, and tensions, all products of Fuller's complex mathematical calculations. By mimicking the "structure inherent in the atom and its nucleus," Fuller hoped modernist architecture would yield to his vision for a world of light, airy, and economical spheres.[3]

Despite Fuller's eagerness to extoll the practicality of his architectural inventions, he also saw the *Great Circle* as a metaphysical offering. The models were visual metonyms for the quantum or atom-age thinking that Fuller promoted from the postwar period until his death in 1983. Ultimately, it was his belief in a "synergetic," or antispecialized, ecology of thought that he hoped to impart to his students; carving a path to the future founded in the belief in collaboration, universality, interrelatedness, and a technocratic allegiance to progress through design.[4] Fuller encouraged the blurring of the divide between architectural and philosophical inclinations in his writings, describing synergy as "geodesically-structured thoughts" and "circularly interrelated . . . conceptually definitive, locally transformable, polyhedronal understanding."[5] This "synergistic" thinking found a viable expression within the context of Black Mountain College's pedagogic ethos. Fuller hoped his models, both literal and theoretical, would guide students toward a confluence of the disparate psychological, technological, and ecological fields, eventually leading humanity to responsible stewardship of what he lovingly called Spaceship Earth.

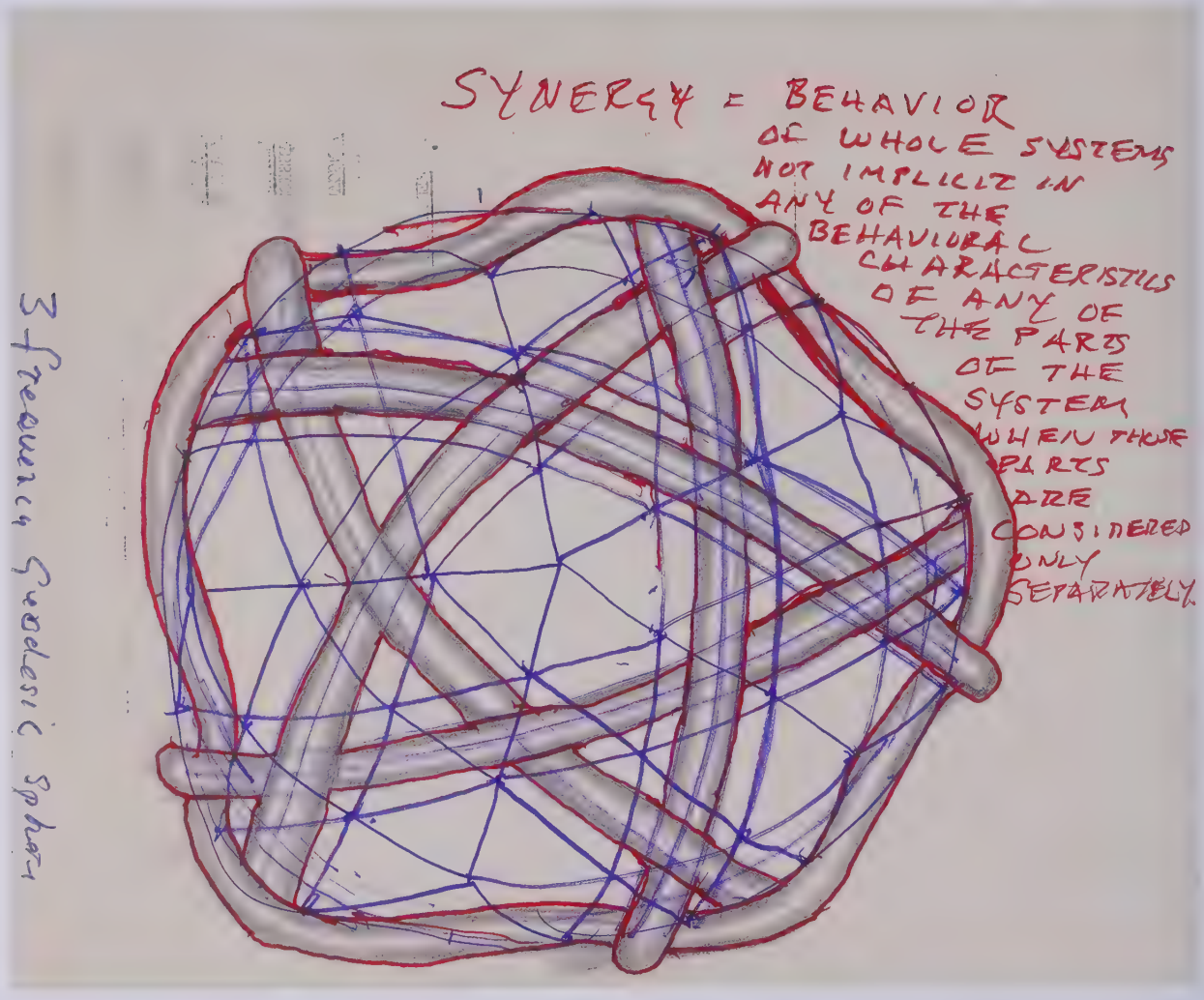




previous: The Supine Dome with model in foreground, 1948. Photo by Beaumont Newhall.
top: Nancy Newhall, *Buckminster Fuller, Black Mountain College*, 1948/1990. Gelatin silver print, 7 ½ x 9 ½ inches.
bottom: R. Buckminster Fuller, *Great Circle Sphere Model*, n.d. Steel, 20 ½ inches diameter.

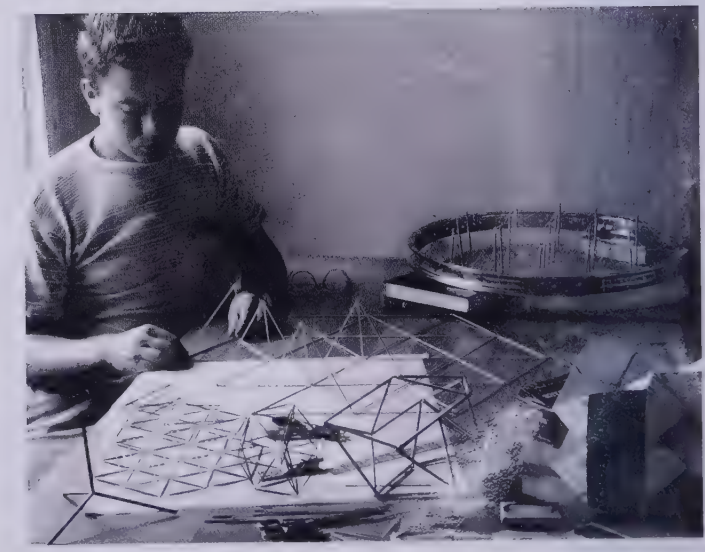
1. Richard Lippold, quoted in *Buckminster Fuller: Anthology for the New Millennium* (New York: St. Martin, 2001), 201; Merce Cunningham, interview, *Buckminster Fuller: Thinking Out Loud*, PBS American Masters, 1996.
2. Kenneth Snelson, telephone interview with the author, August 13, 2014
3. R. Buckminster Fuller, "Buckminster Fuller," *Perspecta* 1 (Summer 1952): 30.
4. See R. Buckminster Fuller and E. J. Applewhite, *Synergetics: Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking* (New York: Macmillan, 1975–79).
5. R. Buckminster Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (New York: Dutton, 1978), 67.

R. Buckminster Fuller, *Great Circle Sphere Model*, n.d. Aluminum and steel, 20 ½ inches diameter.



R. Buckminster Fuller, *Three Frequency Geodesic Sphere*, n.d.
Graphite and felt-tip pen on paper, 8 ½ x 10 ¼ inches.

Geodesic dome held aloft by students, summer 1949. Photo by Masato Nakagawa.



opposite, top Hazel Larsen Archer, *Students with Buckminster Fuller's Dome*, 1949. Gelatin silver print, 6 ⅛ x 9 ⅞ inches.
opposite, bottom left Students working on molds for dome, summer 1949.
opposite, bottom right Kenneth Snelson working on geometric sculptures, summer 1949.
above Richard Lippold, *Sketch for* The Sun, 1953. Ink and graphite on paper, 14 ¾ x 19 ½ inches.

EMERSON WOELFFER

Last Internment

JENNIFER GROSS

The resignation of Theodore Dreier and Josef Albers during the 1948–49 academic year marked the end of an era at Black Mountain College. In advance of their departure, Albers asked R. Buckminster Fuller to organize the summer session of 1949. Engineer-inventor Fuller was a resident lecturer in 1949 at the Institute of Design (ID) in Chicago, the school founded and directed by Hungarian émigré and Albers's fellow Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy as an experimental workshop for art and design. Like Albers, Moholy-Nagy had fled Germany after the Nazis closed the Bauhaus in Dessau in 1933. The program at the ID resembled that of Black Mountain College, as both schools embraced a cross-disciplinary approach to teaching, modeled after Albers's and Moholy-Nagy's experiences at the Bauhaus.

For the Black Mountain summer session, Fuller invited Emerson Woelffer, a teacher at the ID since 1942 who had studied at the Art Institute of Chicago's studio program and in 1938 had joined the Work Projects Administration (WPA) artists program. At the time of his Black Mountain appointment, Woelffer had begun to garner national attention, including an invitation to show in the Whitney Annual Exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and his first one-person exhibition in New York at the Artist's Gallery. His wife, Dina, a photographer who had studied under Harry Callahan, would also teach at Black Mountain that summer.[1]

Attesting to his admiration of tribal art from Africa and the Americas, which he had recently seen at gallery exhibitions and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Woelffer began to make paintings populated by totemic figures that echoed primitive idols. *Last Internment* (1948) was painted in Chicago and is a stylistic precursor to the *Bucky Fuller Series* (1949) he created at Black Mountain.[2] The figures that populate this composition and its wildly vivacious palette are typical of his work from this period.

After their summer in Asheville, the Woelffer headed to New York, where Jackson Pollock—who shared Woelffer's passion for jazz, gestural painting, and tribal art—beseeched them to stay and seek more permanent gallery representation. The Woelffers, however, chose to travel on to the Yucatán, where they lived and worked for six months before moving to Colorado Springs to teach until 1955 at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. With travel, art making, and teaching becoming the framework for their lives, the couple settled in Los Angeles in 1960, and Woelffer, who enjoyed a rich career that included numerous museum exhibitions and prestigious awards, became an inspirational teacher at Chouinard Art Institute (now the California Institute of the Arts, or CalArts) in nearby Valencia; his students there included Terry Allen, Joe Goode, Dennis Hopper, Allen Ruppersberg, and Ed Ruscha.

Emerson Woelffer, summer 1949. Photo by Masato Nakagawa.

1. Gerald Norland, in *Emerson Woelffer: A Solo Flight*, ed. Ed Ruscha (Los Angeles: REDCAT, in association wth California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, 2003), 13.
2. Ibid

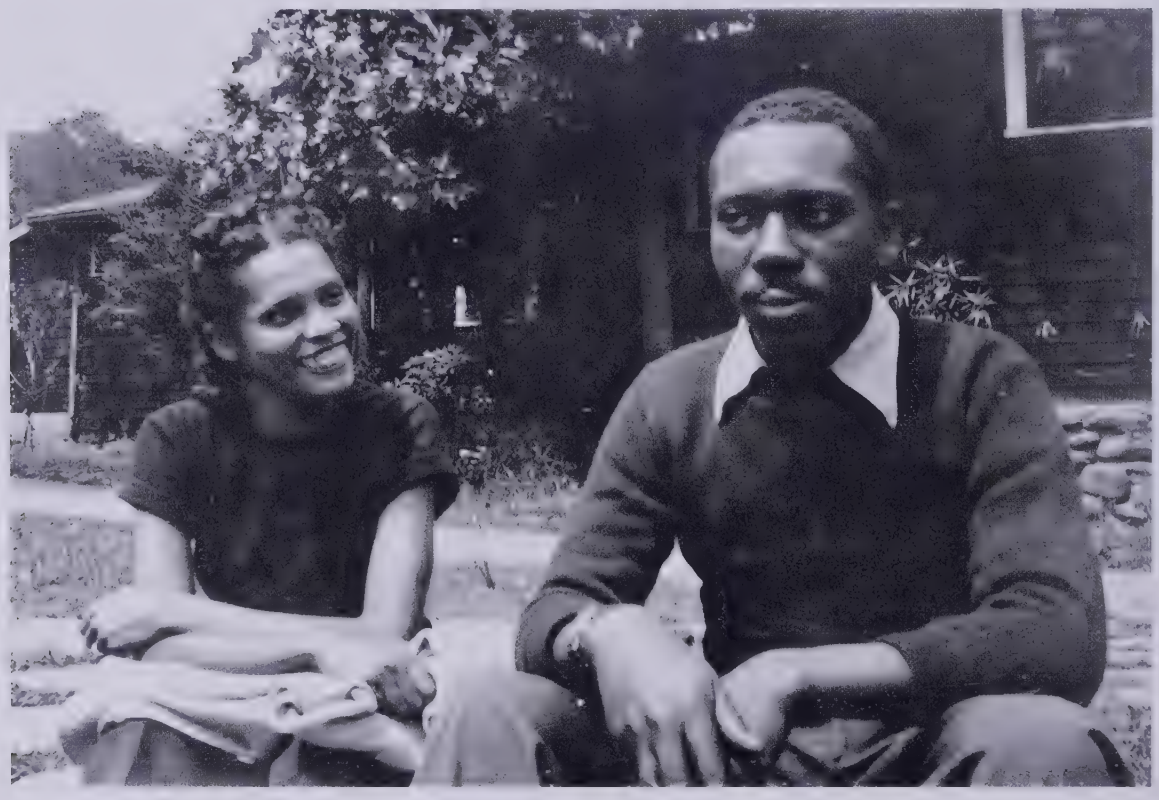
Emerson Woelffer, *Last Internment*, 1948. Oil and enamel on canvas, 30 x 40 inches.

Emerson Woelffer exhibition, installation view, c. 1948–49. Photo by Dina Woelffer.

Mary Callery, *Study for Pyramid*, 1949. Bronze, 25 ¼ x 18 x 16 ¼ inches.

STOWAWAYS

EVA DÍAZ



Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence, n.d. Photo by Bacia Stepner Edelman.

Nancy Newhall photographing Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, summer 1946.

When husband and wife Josef and Anni Albers arrived at Black Mountain College in December 1933, the headline of the *Asheville Citizen Times* proclaimed that "Professor" Josef and "Frau" Anni Albers had disembarked from Germany—note the difference in their titles. Anni, already an artist of note in her own right, had been hired as a tutor as compared to Josef, who held the title of professor. In her first few months at the college, Anni performed a second role, that of her husband's translator; she'd had an English governess as a child and was much more proficient in the language than Josef.

By the fall of 1934, Anni, who soon after arriving had founded the college's weaving department, was officially appointed to the faculty. She was among many key female figures who either came to Black Mountain College as the guests of their male partners or were given junior or provisional appointments when their male partners were awarded senior positions. Such was the case for Irene Schawinsky, who served, from 1936 to 1938, as a tutor in dress design—which essentially meant she designed and produced the costumes for the work of her husband Xanti, a full-time faculty member in theater. Also in this group was Johanna Jalowetz, who taught voice lessons and bookbinding after her husband Heinrich—the campus musicologist—passed away. Other "faculty wives" such as Helen Frankenthaler, Elaine de Kooning, Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, Nancy Newhall, and Mary Fiore received no appointments whatsoever.[1]

A few of these women were eventually given teaching commissions independent of their spouses, but just as often they made significant contributions to the college community as students or as unpaid faculty.[2] (In its historical context, Black Mountain College was nevertheless relatively enlightened about issues of gender equality; it was, after all, a coed campus with several female faculty. Keep in mind that a place like Princeton University didn't even *admit* women students until 1969.)[3]

The case of Anni Albers shows that women could assume public roles of authority on the Black Mountain campus, even if in most cases women (including Anni) were initially "stowaways," on their husbands' academic appointments. Both Josef and Anni had been faculty at the Bauhaus, where some of the first prominent leadership roles in the history of higher education had been offered to women. Yet at the Bauhaus only Albers's mentor in the Weaving Workshop, Gunta Stötzl, could claim the historic professional accomplishment of being named a female "master" at the school.[4]

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1. Helen Frankenthaler accompanied Clement Greenberg to Black Mountain College in 1950. They had a five-year relationship before she married Robert Motherwell, who had also taught there.

2. A side conversation could be had about the role of female students, including the ceramist Karen Karnes, the weaver Trude Guermonprez, and the dancer Elizabeth Jennerjahn who were hired at Black Mountain as guest consultants, student teachers, or guest faculty. It would be particularly fertile to chart differences in their experiences in relation to those of their male partners (David Weinrib in the case of Karnes, and W. Pete Jennerjahn) who also lacked seniority or positions of authority on campus (such as Karnes's husband David Weinrib and Jennerjahn).

3. Black Mountain College was progressive on other fronts, too: for example, it was the first racially desegregated college in the South. The sexual politics of the school were another issue entirely; members of the community were discouraged from promiscuity, and gays were tacitly encouraged to remain closeted. (In 1945, the college's rector was shamed out of his post when his homosexuality was exposed.) In keeping with the widespread prudishness of the 1940s, all forms of sexual contact outside of marriage were vigilantly policed until the late 1940s. By the 1950s, however, a culture of sexual freedom became practically a selling point on campus, and homosexuality, as well as pre- and extramarital sexual behavior, was more or less openly acknowledged. That is not to say that homophobia or sexism disappeared.

4. Since guild terminology is gendered, Stötzl held the position of "master," not of "mistress."

Upon Stötzl's untimely departure (she was hounded out of the Bauhaus for marrying a Jewish student), Anni was appointed acting director of the Weaving Workshop, just as Marianne Brandt was acting head of the Metal Workshop there.[5] Neither would achieve master-teacher status.

Yet in a striking reversal of the familiar narrative of overlooked wife-artist, Josef was a few (but only a few) steps behind Anni in racking up accolades and publications: Anni was given a one-person show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1949, and in 1959 a compendium of her writings titled *On Designing* was published. In contrast, Josef's first retrospective outside a commercial gallery was at Yale University Art Gallery in 1956, seven years after hers, and his book *Interaction of Color* was released in 1963, four years after her first book. (Josef did have the remarkable honor of being the first living artist given a Metropolitan Museum of Art retrospective in 1971.)

In general, the career prospects and work of Black Mountain visitors like painters Knight Lawrence and de Kooning, photographer Dina Woelffer, and noted photography critic Newhall reflect the lack of professional equality for women in the 1940s, compared to the promise of their husbands' careers. Newhall, for example, was acting curator of the MoMA photography department from 1942 to 1945, replacing her husband Beaumont Newhall, the first director of the department, when he was called to war. She would not be offered a position when her husband returned to fill his, though she was perhaps the foremost authority on the work of Paul Strand, Edward Weston, and Ansel Adams. De Kooning exhibited her painting in solo and group exhibitions throughout the 1950s, but her husband Willem de Kooning's fame overshadowed her reputation.[6] Knight Lawrence did not begin exhibiting her painting seriously until the 1970s, and her first retrospective was not organized until she was nearly eighty. Even the career of M. C. Richards, an English professor and poet at Black Mountain (like Anni, a faculty member, not just the wife of one) was at times subordinated to that of her husband Albert William Levi; when attempts were made to fire him in 1950, she was also denied reappointment, in spite of the strong support on campus for her teaching.[7]

As art historian Anne Wagner has noted in her book *Three Artists (Three Women)*, marriages between artists can be both collaborative and competitive, demonstrating "once again (if anyone has forgotten) that marriage is traditionally an economic relationship . . . using the standard formula, *me* versus *us*." In the "us" category, the husband's career often loomed larger—large enough that taking care of children would have presented women in these relationships an overwhelming burden. Of all the couples mentioned above who came to Black Mountain, only the Newhalls had a child. In the case of the de Koonings, Elaine considered it impossible for a woman to raise children and pursue a career as an artist.[8]

In the pre–women's liberation era of Black Mountain College, women negotiated the conventions of domestic power relations and the effects of those conventions in their social and professional lives, in sometimes unexpected ways: de Kooning for her part refused to perform almost any traditionally female duties, such as cooking or housekeeping. It is important to note that the model of community-based, collaborative education proposed at Black Mountain College envisioned pedagogy to be a twinned project of personal growth *and* progressive social transformation. Traditional educational

Pra-Veena and Nataraj Vashi, summer 1949. Photo by Masato Nakagawa.

hierarchies were frequently disregarded or upturned. Many visitors to Black Mountain College later reflected on the fluidity of student-teacher roles and the way that a sense of community-wide intellectual commitment created an egalitarian experience of social empowerment through knowledge. As an example, members of the faculty often sat in as students in other professors' courses, joining their wives as stowaways of another sort.

5. See *Bauhaus 1919–1933: Workshops for Modernity*, ed. Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 334

6. Similar limitations dogged painter Lee Krasner, wife of Jackson Pollock, though de Kooning's predominately figurative style may have contributed to the critical neglect of her work; other figurative painters associated with her gallery, Tibor de Nagy, in the 1950s are only today beginning to be reassessed.

7. According to Martin Duberman, "In essence, the vote against M. C. was a vote against Levi. As his wife, she was lumped with him into a single package, and since there was considerable sentiment for getting rid of Levi, it was assumed (for so the traditionalist's mind works) that his wife, of course, must go as well." Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain College: An Exploration in Community* (1972; repr. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 345.

8. This is Elaine's brother Conrad Fried: "Elaine in no way was interested in having a child, or in cooking dinner." Quoted in Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan, *De Kooning: An American Master* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 237–39.

John Cage and Merce Cunningham at the home of Mrs. Ira Julian en route to New York from Black Mountain College, summer 1953.

Elaine de Kooning (center), R. Buckminster Fuller, Ray Johnson, Albert Lanier, and others with the Supine Dome, 1948

Elaine de Kooning, *Untitled Drawing*, 1948. Enamel on paper on canvas, 13 ½ x 16 ¼ inches.

ELAINE DE KOONING

Untitled Drawing and Untitled #16

HELEN MOLESWORTH

In the summer of 1948, Willem and Elaine de Kooning headed to Black Mountain College. They had heard about the school from their friends Merce Cunningham and John Cage, who had been there the previous spring and had extolled life at the college in "tales of wonder and delight." An invitation ultimately came from Josef Albers, on the recommendation of Cage, after Mark Tobey had at the last minute announced that he would be unable to attend the summer session.

Like many artists' spouses, Elaine de Kooning did not teach classes but attended them. She also threw herself into all aspects of life during the 1948 summer session. She populates numerous archival photographs, notably appearing in those documenting the failed attempt at constructing R. Buckminster Fuller's first geodesic dome and gamely appearing in costume as Frisette in the staging of Erik Satie's *The Ruse of Medusa* (1913). De Kooning was an artist in her own right, however, and while at Black Mountain she worked on a series of drawings that seem to manifest the influence of Albers's courses in color theory and design.

Working with enamel on paper, de Kooning was able to integrate the texture and color density of painting with the intimacy and scale of drawing, thereby straddling the specificity of both mediums. In her drawings, biomorphic and geometric shapes share the page in a loosely arranged grid. De Kooning used a heavy black outline to demarcate her shapes. This line lends the effect of collage, as sometimes the shapes appear to rest heavily on the page. In her *Untitled Drawing* (1948) with the red square in the lower-right-hand corner, blocks of color appear beneath heavily outlined shapes, complicating the more straightforward figure-ground relationships established by the placement of the shapes on the yellow background. In this work, the mosaic quality of de Kooning's color blocking and composition appears to be an experiment with how shapes "pop" or "float" based on color combinations. This quickly changing gestalt from flatness to floating was a trick possibly derived from the Albers playbook. Certainly when de Kooning, in her later role as a particularly sensitive interviewer of artists for *ArtNews*, would write about Albers, she commented on how he was a "master of illusion."[1] But Albers wasn't the only influence on the community that summer. According to Martin Duberman, "Elaine de Kooning is said to have remarked that she fell in love with Bucky at the moment he said, 'And here's our old friend, the tetrahedron.'"[2] While there is no tetrahedron in either drawing, this offhand comment suggests that de Kooning's avoidance of straightforward circles, squares, and rectangles was in dialogue with the idiosyncrasies of Fuller's overall project. De Kooning also worked on canvases during this period: in *Untitled #16* (1948), geometry gives way to biomorphism, and the Abstract Expressionist strategy of allover composition puts pressure on the effect of the logic of collage. What remains is a cheery yellow palette and a highly activated and playful relationship between figure and ground, facilitated by de Kooning's use of a strong outline. De Kooning remained a visual artist in the wake of her Black Mountain College sojourn, though she very much followed her own path, building on and extending many of the intimacies cultivated at the college, as she turned to portraiture—both in journalistic writing and in painting.

1. Elaine de Kooning, "De Kooning Memories," *Vogue*, December 1983, 350.
2. Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (1972; repr., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 296.

Elaine de Kooning, *Untitled Drawing*, 1948. Enamel on paper on canvas, 13 ½ x 16 ¼ inches.

Elaine de Kooning, *Untitled #16*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 19 ½ x 31 ½ inches.

WILLEM DE KOONING
Asheville

HARRY COOPER

Willem de Kooning painted *Asheville* in the cramped quarters he shared with his wife, Elaine, at Black Mountain College in July and August 1948.[1] His mature style is evident, arguably for the first time, but at an unusually compressed scale, which only gives the work more power. It is pure de Kooning, writ small.

When de Kooning received a last-minute invitation from Josef Albers to teach at Black Mountain, he accepted, glad for some income and a paid getaway.[2] This getaway, however, was more than the de Koonings bargained for: the location was remote, and the two-room cottage that greeted them was bare. De Kooning began making drawings in the living room, as if to re-create some version of his New York studio, where, surrounded by his art, he would grab fragments here and passages there to import into new work, in a fluid process of collage-inspired painting. As Elaine recalled, "He was in a vacuum that he began to fill with pastels, working feverishly on one after another for a couple of weeks until the walls were covered with them. Finally he taped a 25-by-32-inch sheet of paper to a board on his easel and began to use oils."[3] *Asheville* (1948) was born.

Few if any of the drawings de Kooning made that summer survive; no doubt he cut most of them up in the process of trying out elements for the painting. *Asheville* seems to have occupied de Kooning for the whole summer, and maybe even into the fall.[4] And yet the surface of the painting is not thick: rather than piling paint on paint, de Kooning would scrape down and rebuild. "Time after time I had the familiar but still painful experience of coming home to find an image I loved blasted away," Elaine recalled.[5]

Asheville is thick in a different sense: densely packed with heterogeneous images and clashing marks—organic and geometric, colored and monochrome, fast and slow, dripped and scraped, large and small, thick and thin, and shiny and matte. For Thomas Hess, a confidante of the artist's, the painting was "*of* sliced and torn paintings and drawings, pinned and tacked and taped together, and of the landscapes and figures and environment that the drawings analyse."[6] At the least, the influence of the summer landscape is present in the mere fact of color, reintroduced in and against the black-and-white armature of the paintings that de Kooning had been working on before the summer.

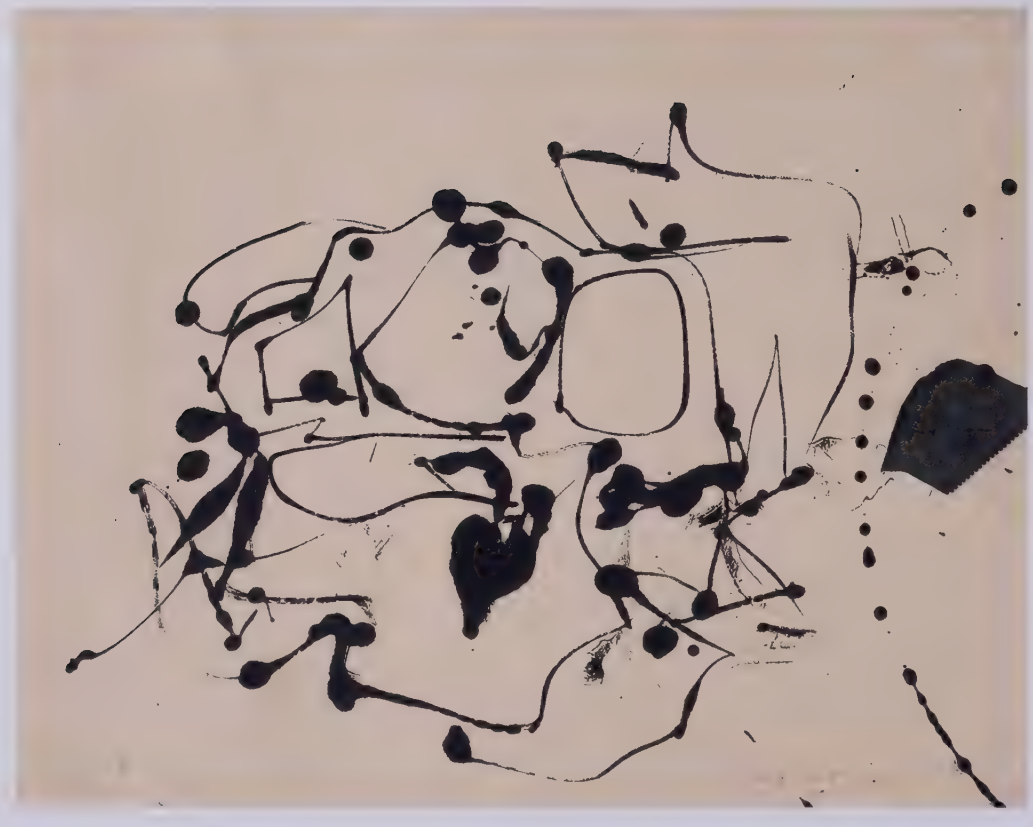
De Kooning's ability to hold all these elements in tension is the achievement of *Asheville*, and this would become a hallmark of his work for the next four decades. Did this heterogeneity itself owe something to his (cultural, not natural) surroundings? At Black Mountain, de Kooning painted sets for Cage's production of Erik Satie's *The Ruse of Medusa* (1913) and had long discussions with R. Buckminster Fuller. Merce Cunningham recalled "the way all these people in different fields could get together and could—not work together, but discuss and be together as people, sharing ideas or sharing conversation or whatnot. . . . Like Fuller and de Kooning and Cage and myself."[7]

Another occurrence must be noted: the July 21 suicide of Arshile Gorky, de Kooning's great mentor and friend. When the news reached Black Mountain, de Kooning secluded himself for days, and many things in *Asheville* can be read as homage to Gorky, from its whiplash line and drip to its semi-lyrical evocation of nature. One year later, he wrote an impassioned letter to *ArtNews*, which had wrongly referred to him as an influence on Gorky, declaring "I come from 36 Union Square" (Gorky's New York studio) and "I am glad that it is about impossible to get away from his powerful influence."[8] Gorky's death, however traumatic, may have come as something of an unburdening for de Kooning. He reportedly told Pat Passlof, one of his devoted Black Mountain students, "Now I have a chance."[9]

Hazel Larsen Archer, *Willem de Kooning*, 1948. Gelatin silver print, 10 x 7 inches. Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

1. For the definitive account of the de Kooning couple's summer, see Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan, *De Kooning: An American Master* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 253–64. Although Willem worked in the cottage, he and Elaine were estranged, and Willem often slept elsewhere (260).
2. Mark Tobey had just cancelled, and John Cage recommended de Kooning to Josef Albers as a replacement. Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 146, and *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, ed. Vincent Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 256. Stevens and Swan are more precise: while Cage made the suggestion to Albers, the sculptor Peter Grippe had already recommended him (*De Kooning*, 254).
3. Elaine de Kooning, "De Kooning Memories," *Vogue*, December 1983, 352–53. Elaine is indeed describing the painting that became *Asheville*, despite the fact that she recalled slightly different media and dimensions. (The painting is on cardboard, includes enamel, and is closer to 26-by-32 inches.)
4. Stevens and Swan claim, without adducing any evidence, that de Kooning finished the painting in New York (*De Kooning*, 263).
5. Ibid., 261.
6. Thomas Hess, *Willem de Kooning* (New York: Braziller, 1959), 19.
7. Merce Cunningham, quoted in Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (1972; repr., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 296.
8. Stevens and Swan, *De Kooning*, 262.
9. Ibid., 656 (note to page 262). De Kooning's misspelling of the town's name on the back of the canvas ("Ashville") may be a reference to Gorky's death, suggests Charles Moore Brock, "Describing Chaos: Willem de Kooning's Collage Painting *Asheville* and Its Relationship to Traditions of Description and Illusionism in Western Art," Master's thesis, University of Maryland, 1993, 8–9.

Willem de Kooning, *Asheville*, 1948. Oil and enamel on cardboard, 25 5/8 x 31 7/8 inches.



top Willem de Kooning, *Untitled*, c. 1948. Graphite on paper, 12 ¾ x 15 ¾ inches. Private collection of Marina Budhos and Marc Aronson, Maplewood, NJ.
bottom Willem de Kooning, *Asheville*, 1948. Sapolin on paper, 19 ⅛ x 24 inches.

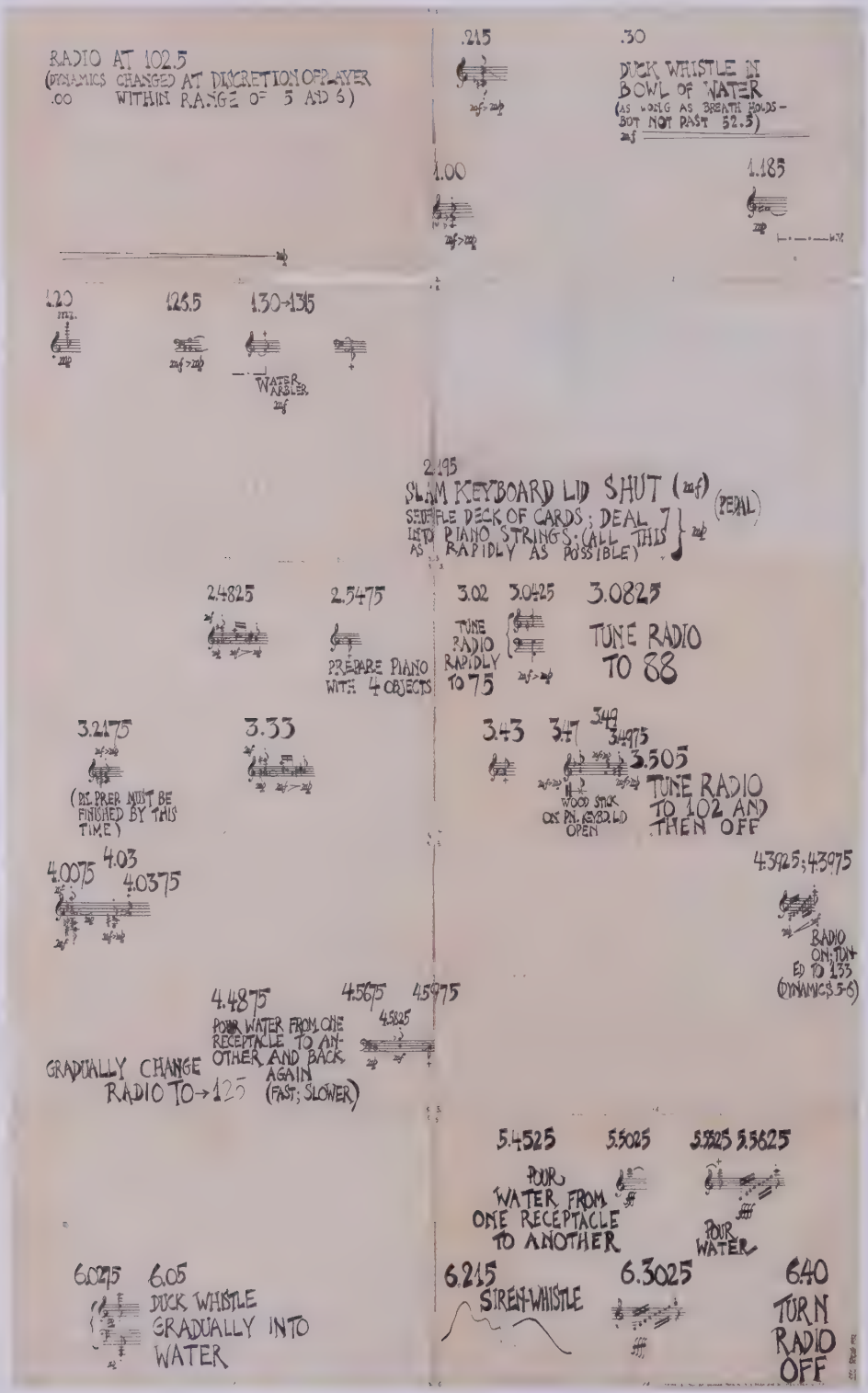
Willem de Kooning, *Asheville #1*, 1948. Oil and graphite on paper, 14 ½ x 12 inches.

Pat Passlof, *Yardstick*, 1948. Oil and enamel on canvas, 33 ½ x 43 inches.

Ray Spillenger, *Sortie*, 1952. Oil and mixed media on canvas, 19 7/8 x 15 3/4 inches.

CAGE, TUDOR, AND THE VISUAL LANGUAGE OF INDETERMINACY

NANCY PERLOFF



John Cage, *Water Music*, 1952. India ink on paper; ten sheets, 11 x 17 inches.

Nancy Dunn, Josef Albers, Merce Cunningham, and John Cage, 1948.
Photo by Felix Krowinski.

David Tudor at the home of Mrs. Ira Julian en route to New York from Black Mountain College, summer 1953.

In his lecture "Indeterminacy," the second of three delivered in Darmstadt, Germany, in September 1958, John Cage wrote, "A performance of a composition which is indeterminate of its performance is necessarily unique. It cannot be repeated. When performed for a second time, the outcome is other than it was. Nothing therefore is accomplished by such a performance, since that performance cannot be grasped as an object in time."[1]

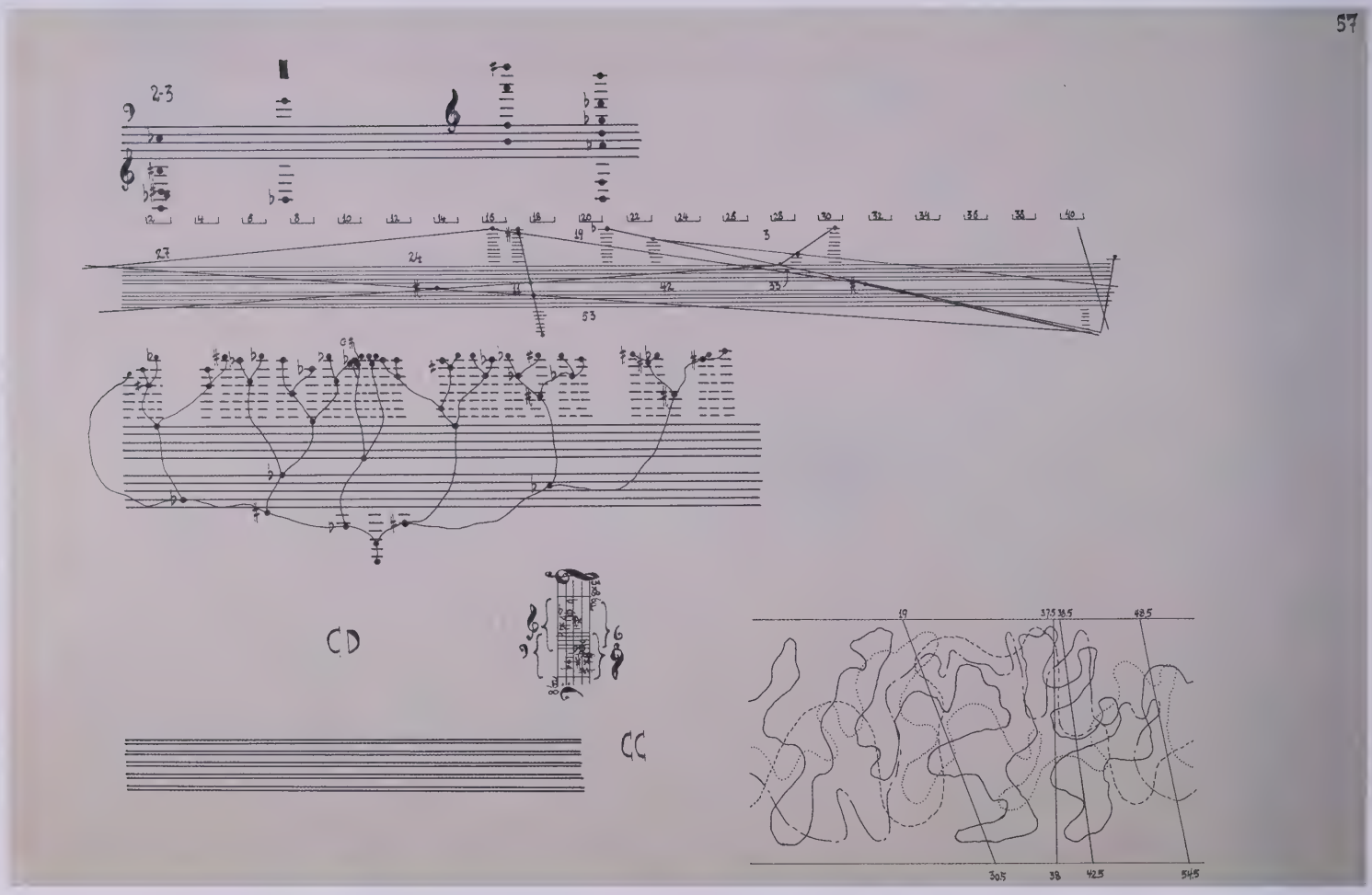
In this quixotic statement, Cage highlighted experimental actions—the "outcome of which are not foreseen"—and "purposeless play," principles that permeate his Concert for Piano and Orchestra: Solo for Piano (1957–58), which he dedicated to painter and fellow Black Mountain College artist Elaine de Kooning and which he expressly intended the virtuoso David Tudor to perform. Cage's frequent practice of dedicating his works may stem from an interest in justifying his musical trajectory by acknowledging the influence of a wide community of artists, writers, and philosophers. In addition, the names he cites provide a historical framework for compositional practices that may seem otherwise unprecedented.[2] In reaching out to a community, Cage sometimes inscribed a score that he had composed decades earlier, as in his dedication of *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951) to the Dada and Fluxus collector Jean Brown (dedication dated 1978, with Brown's first name written "Jane").

Cage gave Solo for Piano elaborate performance instructions and spread copious notations across sixty-three pages. He chose this multiplicity and this maximal information to remove human agency and to produce a highly abstract composition, devoid of audible patterns and repetitions. But how did Solo for Piano become a piece that can be played? To answer this question is to acknowledge, first, that Tudor was the single musician ever to realize the work and, second, that he performed it in only two ways, most often in the second version. While he may have randomly determined the order of Cage's notations and the piece's variable durations, he nevertheless repeated his performances of the work, precluding Cage's idea of a unique and indeterminate composition.

Cage had met Tudor through composer Morton Feldman in 1950 and first collaborated with him on the monumental *Music of Changes* for piano (1951), which had been composed by using the *I Ching* to select musical materials from charts of sounds, durations, and dynamics. The early 1950s marked the beginning of Cage and Tudor's close collaboration.

In Cage's score of *Music of Changes*, every event resulted from combining one element from each of the three charts. Tudor learned each section as soon as Cage completed it, thereby confirming that his meticulous approach could meet the technical challenges.[3] Moreover, in a long letter to Cage written in mid-July 1951, Tudor explained that he was rewriting the pedaling, verifying the performance of grace notes, suggesting new dynamic markings, and clarifying durations. In this way, he expanded the role of the performer. Cage's reply shows his delight in working with Tudor: "Your letter has given me much pleasure; how much exactly I cannot say since I've lost count of the number of times I've reread it."[4]

1. John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 39.
2. Kyle Gann cites predecessors and influences in *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 71–72.
3. See James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 78
4. John Cage, letter to David Tudor, August 5, 1951, in Martin Iddon, *John Cage and David Tudor: Correspondence on Interpretation and Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 19.



John Cage, Concert for Piano and Orchestra with CC notation, c. 1960. Ink and graphite on paper; one of 64 pages, 11 x 17 inches. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

Once Cage completed *Music of Changes*, he had arrived at a fully notated score for which the performance was fixed. By contrast, the score for Solo for Piano was indeterminate with respect to its performance, which meant that the piece could be performed in substantially different ways. Performers were granted the option of producing different readings by filling in pitch content and taking measurements to determine duration and frequency (pitch). They could devise different realizations of a single score. As free as this might seem, Cage wrote Solo for Piano with one performer in mind—Tudor. The composer and the pianist had successfully performed two-piano realizations of Cage's *Winter Music* (1957), his first work to extend indeterminacy from composition to performance. To perform *Winter Music*, Cage produced readings of his own notations and inserted them into his copy of the score. Tudor, by contrast, performed from his own fully notated realization.[5]

Solo for Piano demanded much more from the pianist. In composing this score, Cage used chance procedures to randomly determine the placement of notational techniques on the page and turned to the *I Ching* to decide whether to invent a method of composition, repeat a method already used, or present a variation of a method. As a result, he found himself conceiving new compositional methods as he worked. He arrived at a score consisting of eighty-four notational techniques distributed across sixty-three 11-by-17-inch pages.[6] He identified each notation with letters of the alphabet: the first twenty-six are lettered A to Z, the next twenty-six AA to AZ, then BA to BZ, and finally CA to CF. At the beginning of the piano score, Cage provided an annotated list of his notations, preceded by the following mysterious preamble: "The whole is to be taken as a body of material presentable at any point between minimum (nothing played) and maximum (everything played), both horizontally and vertically. A program made within a determined length of time . . . may involve any reading, i.e. any sequence of parts thereof."

Aside from the need to choose a time frame, this instruction suggests that Cage was granting the performer permission to select and play whichever notations he or she wanted. Yet Cage was well aware of Tudor's approach to indeterminate scores, having worked with him on *Winter Music* and having been familiar with his performance scores for Feldman's *Intersection 3* (1953) and Earle Brown's *Four Systems* (1954). Uninterested in improvisation, Tudor prepared his realizations by taking on a series of rigorous preparatory steps, including measurements, computations, and table conversions of Cage's "graphs," and translating their results into a notation that he could use for performance.[7] To create his first realization of Solo for Piano, Tudor had to select graphs that would play within his predetermined lengths of performance for the Town Hall Retrospective Concert in 1958 and for the accompaniment to Merce Cunningham's dance *Antic Meet*. He approached this by choosing one of each of Cage's notations and coming up with sixty-three different types. He then ordered them to meet the designated time. Tudor transcribed his notation on separate sheets of staff paper and assembled them in a small ring binder.

A comparison between Cage's notation labeled "CC" and Tudor's corresponding realization reveals Tudor's process of translating the visual language of Solo for Piano into a musical expression he could play.[8] Cage's written instructions identify four differently hatched, curved lines, which represent the parameters of frequency, duration, amplitude (volume), and overtone structure. The performer is instructed to measure the distance between horizontal lines above and below the notation and the points of intersection of four slanted lines with the four differently drawn lines. These points of intersection represent sound events, which Tudor transforms into noises produced at the rear of the piano by applying a piece of metal, a hard rubber band, a ruler, a stick on a penny, plastic, and a duck whistle on the strings or through a hole. The pedal is sustained throughout. The differing placements of Tudor's sounds on the staff indicate pitch frequency, while distances between them are timed silences. (His entire CC notation is one minute.)

Ruth Asawa, *Portrait of David Tudor*, c. 1960. Pen, ink, and gouache on paper, 22 3/8 x 17 1/2 inches.

Although Tudor's realization looks quite different from Cage's CC notation, they reflect a common interest in transforming musical notation into an abstract visual language—a seeming testament to Cage and Tudor's friendships with painters Philip Guston, Richard Lippold, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, and artist members of the New York School. Tudor's blue ink and red pencil highlight the squares in which he summarized his instructions. Like Cage, he used numbers, abbreviations, and other codes to devise a language intended for his own performance but not necessarily for others to read.

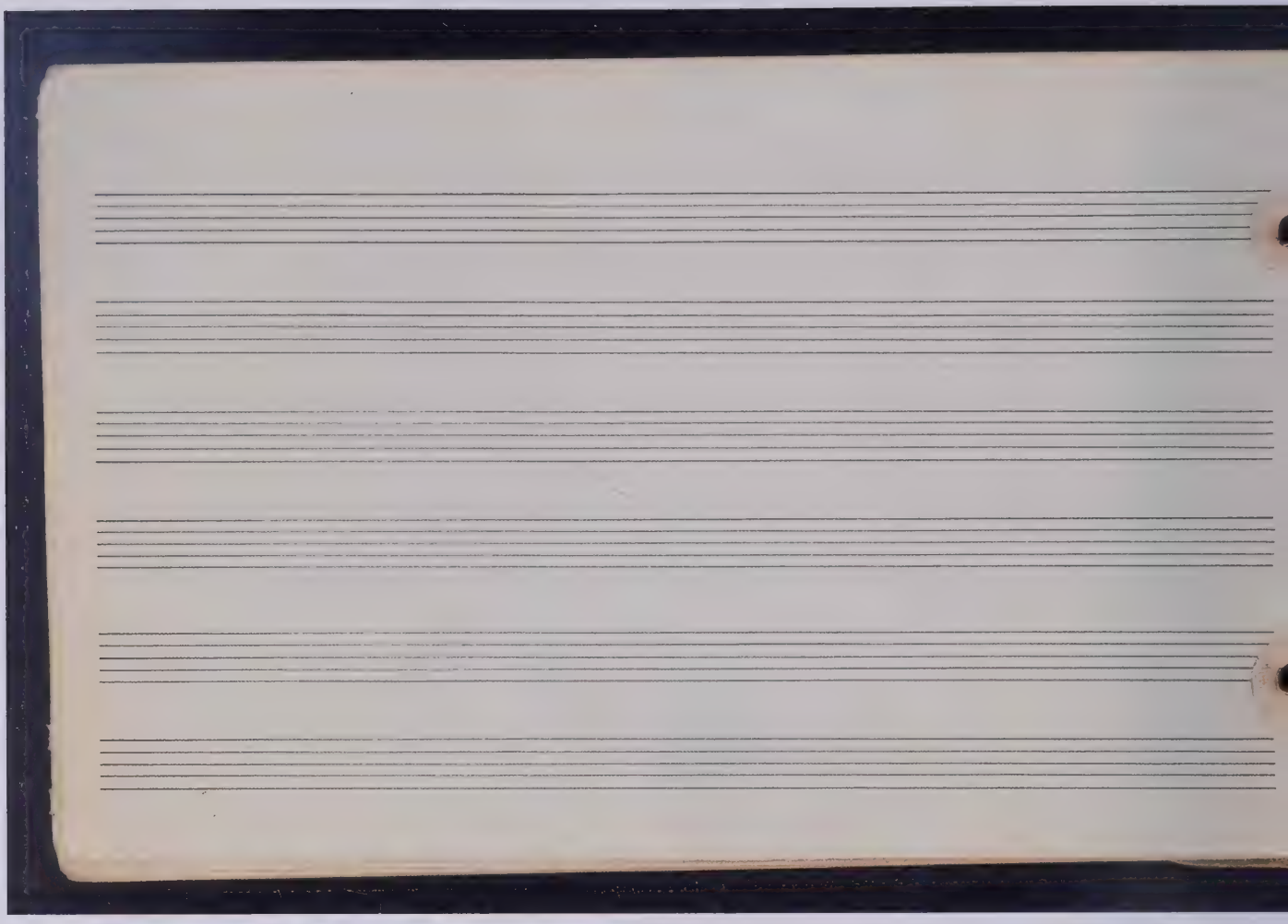
Though Cage set up a random process to create an indeterminate piece with maximal information, he composed his Solo for Piano for one performer, as a private communication. Tudor, in turn, devised two scores that, contrary to Cage's claim in his lecture, fixed randomness through repeated performances and made use of a more determinate notation.

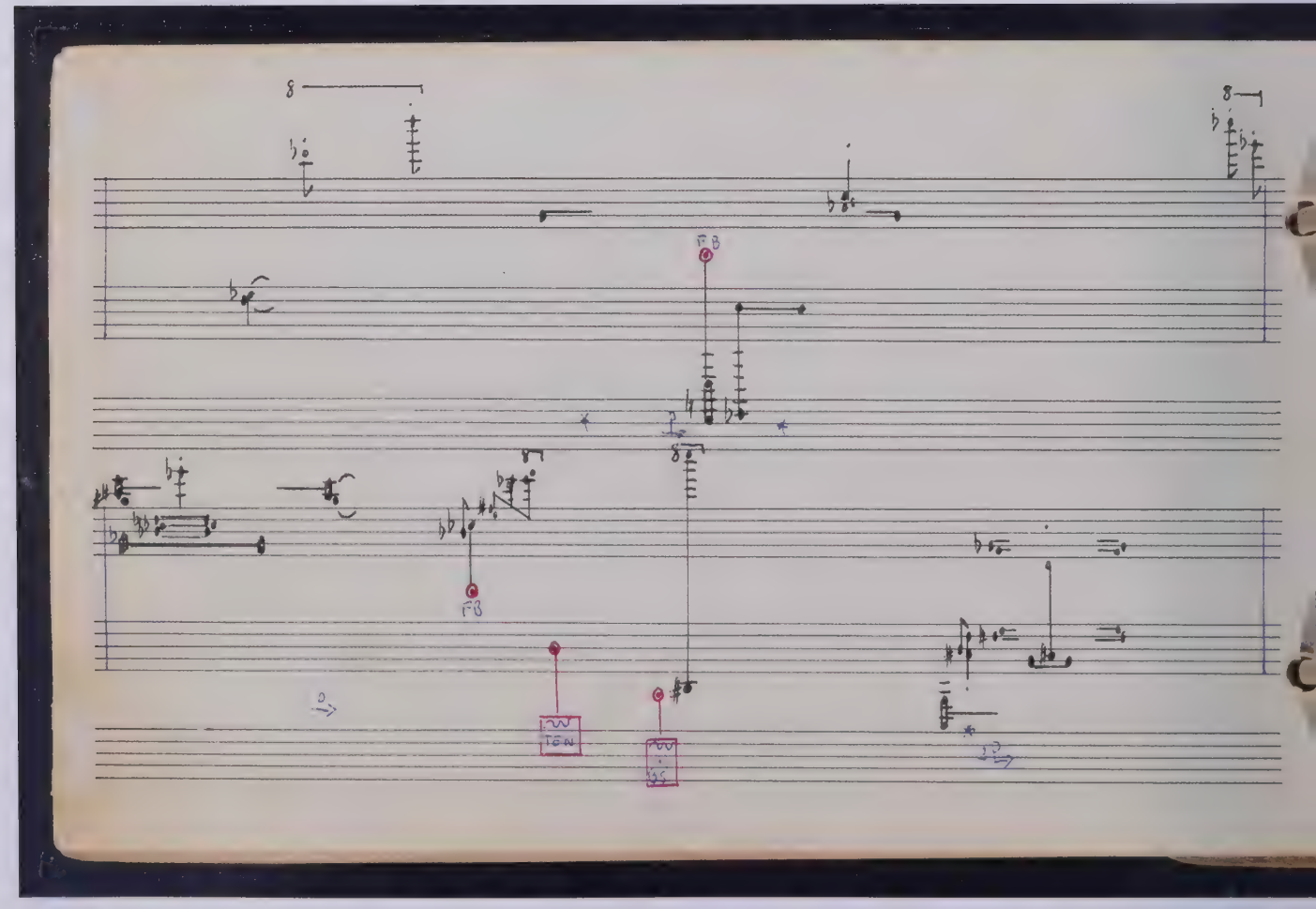
5. See John Holzaepfel, "Cage and Tudor," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*, ed. David Nicholls (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 177.

6. See Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 113.

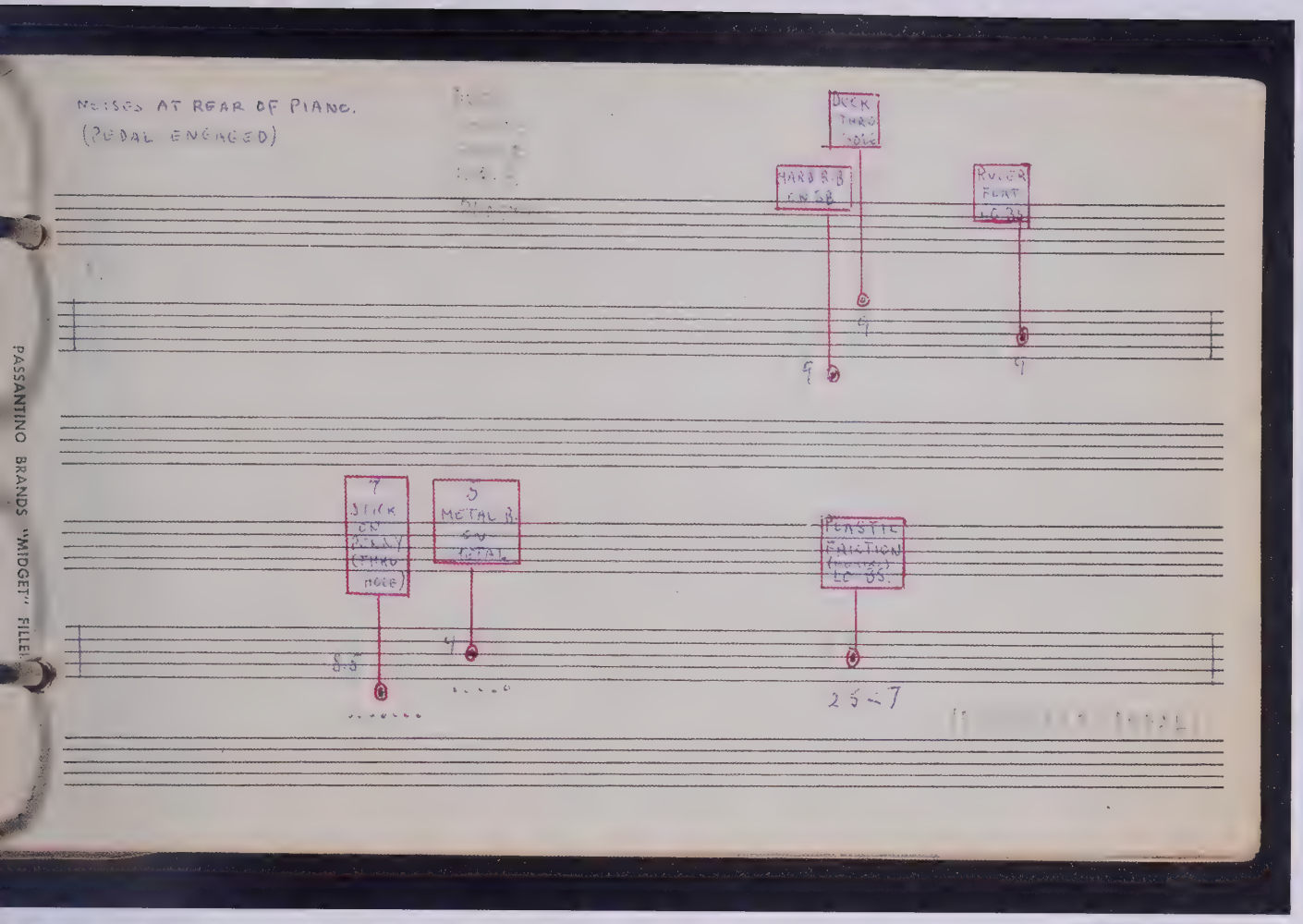
7. See John Holzaepfel, "David Tudor and the *Solo for Piano*," *Writings through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, ed. David W. Bernstein and Christopher Hatch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 138.

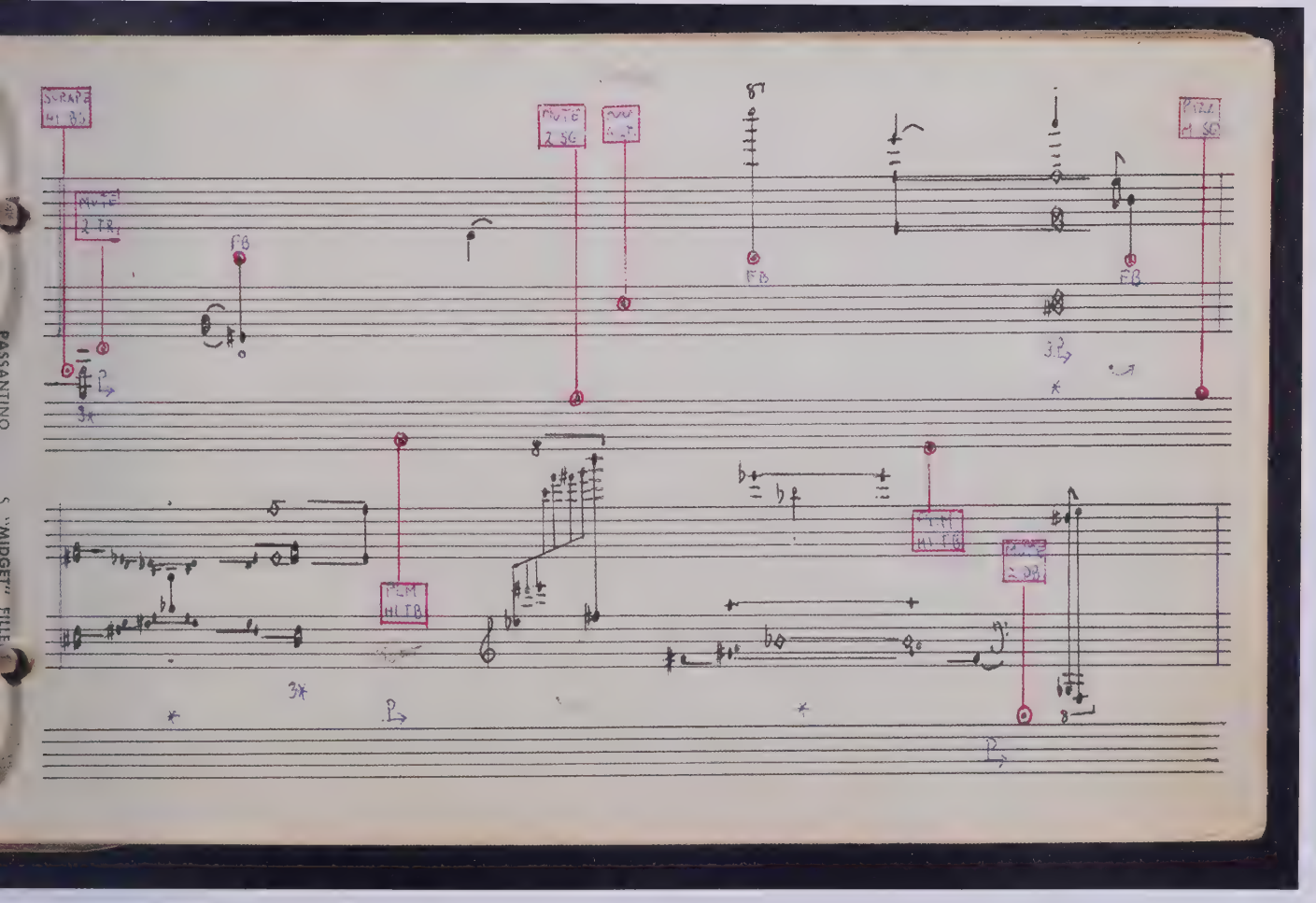
8. Tudor created two realizations of Solo for Piano. This example comes from his first, which he performed at the premiere of Concert for Piano and Orchestra on May 15, 1958, as part of the Twenty-Five Year Retrospective Concert of the Music of John Cage, held at Town Hall in New York





David Tudor, First Realization of John Cage's Concert for Piano and Orchestra: Solo for Piano (Dedicated to Elaine de Kooning), 1958. Ink on staff paper in binder, 5 x 16 ¾ inches.


NOISES AT REAR OF PIANO.
(PEDAL ENGAGED)
DECK THRO' HOLE
HARD R.B. ON SB.
RULER FLAT LC 3½
7 STICK ON SNARE (THRO HOLE)
5 METAL B. ON METAL
PLASTIC FRICTION (RUBBING) LC 85.
8-5
25-7


SCRAPE HI BS.
MUTE 2 TR.
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P.M. HI TB.
P.M. 2 DB.

CONCERT FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

SOLO FOR PIANO

FOR ELAINE DE KOONING

STONY POINT, N.Y., J.C. 1957-8

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PIANO

EACH PAGE IS ONE SYSTEM. FOR A SINGLE PIANIST TO BE PLAYED WITH OR WITHOUT ANY OR ALL PARTS WRITTEN FOR ORCHESTRAL INSTRUMENTS. THE WHOLE IS TO BE TAKEN AS A BODY OF MATERIAL PRESENTABLE AT ANY POINT BETWEEN MINIMUM (NOTHING PLAYED) AND MAXIMUM (EVERYTHING PLAYED), BOTH HORIZONTALLY AND VERTICALLY: A PROGRAM MADE WITHIN A PREDIVIDED LENGTH OF TIME (TO BE ALTERED BY A CONDUCTOR WHEN THERE IS ONE) MAY REMOVE ANY READING, I.E., ANY SEQUENCE OF PARTS OR PARTS THEREOF.

A FOLLOWING THE PERIMETER, FROM ANY NOTE ON IT, PLAY IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS IN THE PROPORTION GIVEN. HERE AND ELSEWHERE, THE ABSENCE OF INDICATIONS OF ANY KIND MEANS FREEDOM FOR THE PERFORMER IN THAT REGARD.

B AN AGGREGATE MUST BE PLAYED AS A SINGLE ICTUS. WHERE THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE, THE UNPLAYABLE NOTES SHALL BE TAKEN AS HARMONICS PREPARED IN ADVANCE. HARMONICS MAY ALSO BE PRODUCED WHERE THEY ARE NOT SO REQUIRED. RESONANCES, BOTH OF AGGREGATES AND INDIVIDUAL NOTES OF THEM, MAY BE FREE IN LENGTH. OVERLAPPINGS, INTERPENETRATIONS, ARE ALSO FREE. THE SINGLE STAFF IS PROVIDED WITH 2 CLEF SIGNS. WHERE THESE DIFFER, AMBIGUITY OBTAINS IN THE PROPORTION INDICATED BY THE 2 NUMBERS ABOVE THE AGGREGATE. THE FIRST OF THESE APPLYING TO THE CLEF SIGN ABOVE THE STAFF. AN INKED IN RECTANGLE ABOVE A PAIR OF NOTES INDICATES A CHROMATIC CLUSTER.

C M = MUTE. P = PIZZ. ALL SINGLE TONES.

D LIKE B, BUT WITH VERTICAL ARPEGGIATIONS AND FREE TENDENCIES MAKING USE OF HARMONICS UNNECESSARY. THE ARPEGGIATIONS IS INDICATED BY DOUBLE ARROWS ACCOMPANIED BY A SERIES OF NUMBERS. THE SIGN ⊕ 1.1.1 MEANS 1 NOTE IN THE MIDDLE FOLLOWED BY 1 NOTE HIGHER, OR LOWER, FOLLOWED BY 1 NOTE LOWER. IF THE 2ND WAS HIGHER, HIGHER, IF THE SECOND WAS LOWER. V 2.1 MEANS TWO NOTES OF WHICH AT LEAST 1 IS THE HIGHEST OF THE THREE FOLLOWED BY A THIRD LOWER NOTE. THE HORIZONTAL ARROWS REFER TO TIME AND THE TENDENCY OF THE PIECE TO SOUND SOONER, LATER, OR AT THE POINT OF INSERTION.

E PLAY WITH HANDS INDICATED. WHERE CLEFS DIFFER, A NOTE IS EITHER BASS OR TREBLE. THE NOTES HAVING A SINGLE STEM ARE TO BE ARPEGGIATED (UP OR DOWN). PLAY NOTATIONS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT.

F NUMBERS ARE SECONDS OR OTHER TIME UNITS.

G OF NOTES WRITTEN PLAY NUMBER GIVEN IN ANY MANNER (KEYS, HARP) BEGINNING AND ENDING AS INDICATED BY ARROW. DYNAMIC INDICATIONS ACCOMPANY EACH. CIRCLE OR THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF WHICH THE NOTES ARE PLACED. (SCALE ppp – fff)

H ANY ONE OF TREBLE, AS IN G, OR ANY NUMBER (INCLUDING ALL) IN SEQUENCE, MAINPAINING, IN THE LATTER CASE, THE CLEF SIGN OF THE ONE FIRST PLAYED.

I PIZZ. WHERE INDICATED. A SINGLE TONE, INTERVAL, OR A 3 NOTE AGGREGATE. REAPPEARANCES OF TONES TO BE PLAYED AS ORIGINALLY.

J NUMBERS ARE OF NOTES TO BE PLAYED BETWEEN LIMITS CONNECTED BY LINES. ARROWS INDICATE DIRECTION IN SPACE-TIME BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS. A STRAIGHT LINE ABOVE A NUMBER, MEANS ASCENDING OR DESCENDING GAMUT. ∩∪ MEANS ASCENDING AND DESCENDING.

K DISREGARD TIME. PLAY ONLY OD GIVEN NUMBER OF TONES IN A PERFORMANCE, IGNORING OTHERS OF A GIVEN 3, 4, 5 OR 6 SIDED FIGURE AS GRACES OR PUNCTUATIONS.

L PLAY FROM LEFT TO RIGHT WITH HANDS INDICATED. CLEF AMBIGUITY AS IN B. PERIMETERS WERE COMPOSING MEANS AND DO NOT HERE AFFECT TIME AS THEY DO IN A.

M BEGIN AT LEFT, END AT RIGHT, CHANGING DIRECTION AT INTERSECTIONS IF DESIRED. MAY BE EXPRESSED AS ONE VOICE, A COUNTERPOINT, OR, AS 3 OR 4 VOICES, PARALLEL ONLY IN AREAS INDICATED, NOT OBLIGATORY. ⌐ PED. ⌐ IVC. ⌐ ⌐ SOSTENUTO.

N LIKE I, BUT WITH VARYING DYNAMICS. SOSTENUTO PEDAL GIVEN.

O AUDIBLE (AS CHORDS, LINES, ARPEGGIATIONS AS BAD BUT FREE, ETC.) ONLY BETWEEN HORIZONTAL LINES. PEDALS AS IN M.

P ANY NOISES (INCLUDING AUXILIARY). DYNAMICS OF WHICH ARE NOTATED.

Q LIKE M, BUT IN TIME (ANY UNITS); GOING BACK OVER NOTES NEED FOR INCREASED SPEED.

R RIGOROUSLY IN TIME. NOTES ABOVE STAFF: TREBLE; BELOW: BASS; OR: AMBIGUOUS, LINES WERE PART OF COMPOSING MEANS, THE INTERSECTIONS PRODUCING TONES OTHER THAN THE EXTREME PIANO KEYS.

S LIKE C, BUT WITH NOISES: ABOVE LINE: INSIDE PIANO CONSTRUCTION; BELOW = OUTSIDE PIANO CONSTRUCTION.

T INFLUENCES OF PITCH AND TIME NOTATED AS SHAPES WITH CENTER POINTS TO BE AUDIBLE AS CLUSTERS, A SINGLE ONE CHANGING IN ITS COURSE. NUMBERS REFER TO LOUDNESS (1-64) (SOFT TO LOUD OR LOUD TO SOFT)

U CHOOSE ONE OF 3 MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE AREAS, BOUNDED BY STRAIGHT LINES. PROCEED L TO R. USING NUMBER OF TONES GIVEN WITHIN DOTTED PARTS.

V PERFORMANCE INDICATIONS ABOVE (READING DOWN) ARE DEGREE OF FORCE, MOST-LEAST; VERTICAL DISTANCE OF ATTACK, BRACLOSE; SPEED OF ATTACK, SLOW-FAST. ANY NOISES (BELOW LINE BETWEEN STAVES).

W LEGATO (TRIANGLES) AND STACCATO (ISOLATED NOTES).

X P'S ARE PUNCTUATIONS (BEFORE, AT, DURING, OR END OF INTERVAL THEY ACCOMPANY). ∴ MEANS REPEAT SOMETHING (OR, ALSO, OR ANY ART.) PLAYED BEFORE, BUT CHANGING AMPLITUDE. PEDALS ARE OPTIONAL.

Y 8 PITCH AREAS, CHROMATICALLY ARRANGENT, AND HAVING NUMBER OF CHROMATIC TONES GIVEN (LARGE NUMBERS BELOW STAFF). WHEN NOTES ARE OFF A LINE, THEY BELONG TO EITHER THE UPPER OR THE LOWER AREA. TIME IN SPACE SECONDS AS INDICATED. LOUDNESS GIVEN BY POSITION OF NOTE WITH RESPECT TO AREA VERTICALLY. HIGH IS fff. LOW IS ppp.

Z CLUSTERS ENDING AS SINGLE TONES. DYNAMICS AS IN T.

AA CLEF AT ALL TIMES AMBIGUOUS. 'STARS' TO BE PLAYED FREELY (SINGLE TONES, INTERVALS, AGGREGATES, EVENTS, ETC. WITHIN PITCH LIMITS AND RELATIVE TIME LIMITS INDICATED BY THEIR EXTREMITIES (NOTES), USING GRIDS AS ASSISTANCE. GIVE EMPHASIS BY DYNAMICS, HARMONICS, REPETITION OR OTHER MEANS TO CIRCLED TONES AND MORE EXTREMELY TO THOSE CIRCLED TWICE OR 3 TIMES.

AB CLUSTERS AS IN Z, SOMETIMES BEGINNING AS SINGLE TONES (NUMBERS ARE DYNAMICS).

AC NOISES. OF THOSE NOTATED PLAY ONLY THAT NUMBER GIVEN. I = INTERIOR PIANO CONSTRUCTION. A = AUXILIARY NOISES. O = OUTER PIANO CONSTRUCTION. THE POSITION OF THE NOTE VERTICALLY GIVES ITS LOUDNESS (HIGH = fff) (LOW IS ppp).

AD SINGLE TONES, INTERVALS AND THREE NOTE AGGREGATES WITH AMBIGUOUS STAFF, LEGER, LINES ABOVE, TREBLE, BELOW, BASS.

AE PITCH-TIME AREAS SILENT UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY NUMBERS, MEANING NUMBER OF TONES (ANY) TO BE PLAYED.

AF EACH EVENT (LINE-CONNECTED NOTE) IS TO BE PLAYED BY ONE HAND ONLY. THE CLEF SIGNS ABOVE ARE FOR THE RIGHT HAND, BELOW FOR THE LEFT.

AG OMIT ANY 2 NOTES OF EACH AGGREGATE.

AH CLEFS FREE (TREBLE OR BASS) HAND GIVEN. FOLLOW LINES IN DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY ARROWS.

AI PLAY WHEEL OR 'SKILL' USING ONE(S) NOT PLAYED AS HARMONIC(S). PLAY FROM LEFT TO RIGHT.

AJ NUMBERS ARE PROPORTIONAL OF NOTES TO BE PLAYED IN DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY ARROWS CHANGING CLEF AT POINTS WHERE SIGNS APPEAR.

AK PLAY ANY 1 NOTE IN EACH UNIVERSE ACCORDING TO TIME AND AMPLITUDE GIVEN.

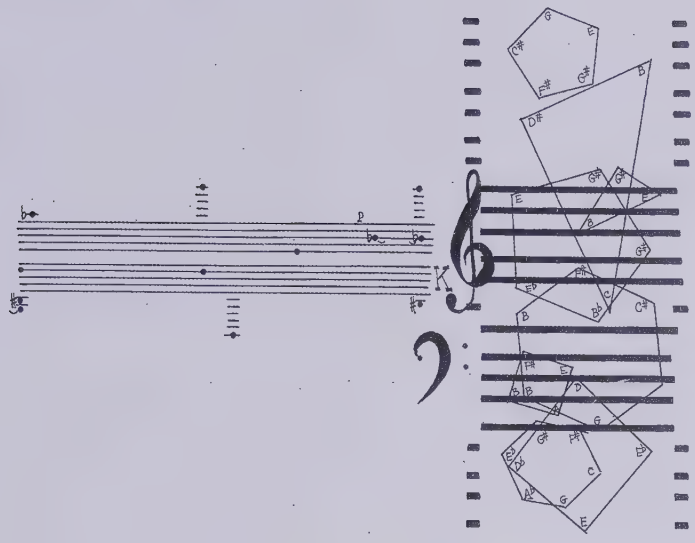
AL ANY 8 TONE GAMUT: LARGE NUMBERS ARE PROPORTIONAL TIME BETWEEN SOUND EVENTS. ⌒ = LEGATO . = STACCATO.

AM SINGLE TONES AND INTERVALS EQUAL LENGTHS OF TIME BETWEEN MARKS ABOVE AND BELOW STAFF.

AN CLEFS REFER TO HANDS, FOLLOWING THE LINE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT PLAY ANY NUMBER OF NOTES WITH ONE HAND FOLLOWED BY A DIFFERENT NUMBER WITH LEFT (ETC., IF NUMBERS CROSS DO NOT USE ALL THE NOTES).

John Cage, Concert for Piano and Orchestra, 1957–58. Offset reproduction of original ink on paper; four of 64 sheets, 11 x 17 inches each.

8



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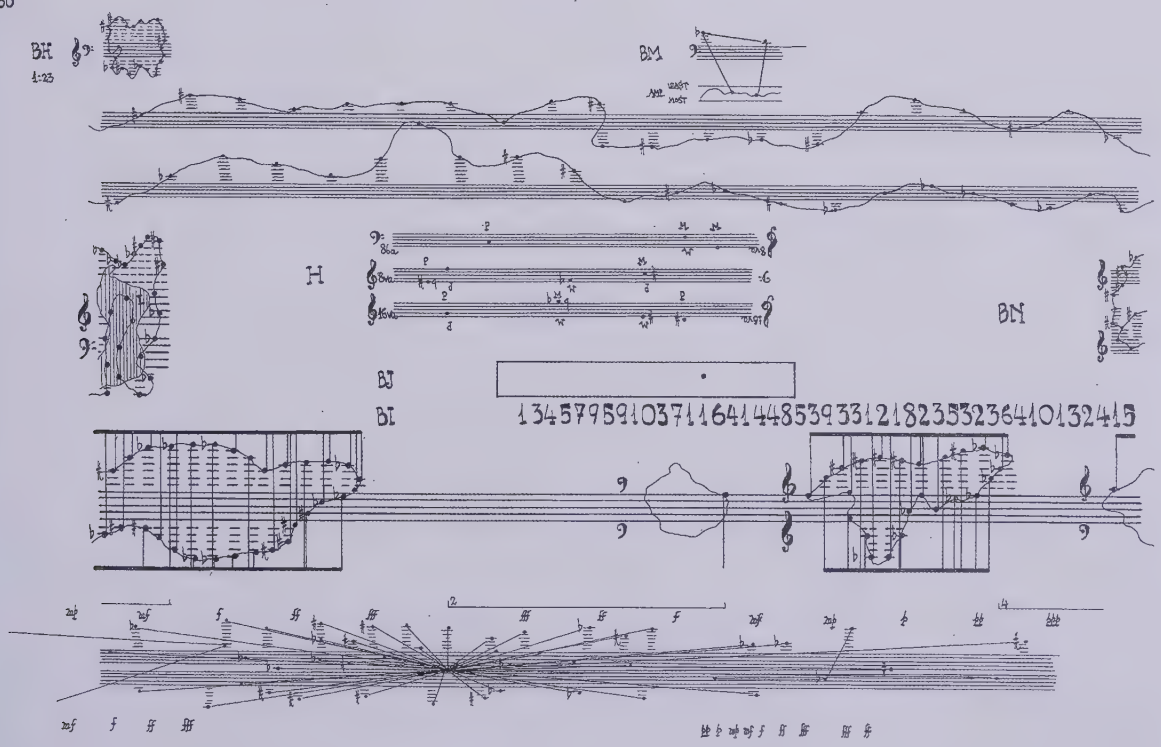


JOHN CAGE
"Defense of Satie"

MARTIN BRODY

In the overheated milieu of Black Mountain College, disputes over artistic means and ends were often fierce, intimate, and interminable. When John Cage came to the college as an instructor during the summer session of 1948, he transformed the college into a laboratory to test his inchoate aesthetics. Cage arrived with a radical, two-part agenda in mind: to rethink the relationship of art and life and to remedy the failures of communication besetting modern music. The premiere of his piano piece *The Perilous Night* (1944) several years before was a watershed moment, an evocation of the turbulence in his life at the time of his failed marriage. "I had poured a great deal of emotion into the piece, and obviously I wasn't communicating this at all," he recalled forty years later. "Or else," he added, "I thought, if I were communicating, then all artists must be speaking a different language, and thus speaking only for themselves. The whole musical situation struck me more and more as a Tower of Babel." From this he concluded: "I determined to give up composition unless I could find a better reason for doing it than communication."[1]

Cage found a better reason, an answer to solipsism, and an alternative motive for composition, in the music of Erik Satie. In a creative leap, he triangulated himself with Satie and the Indian mystic Ramakrishna, interpreting the French composer's ironic music and enigmatic persona in spiritual terms, as an ascetic's renunciation of the ardors of egocentric self-expression. For Cage, the self-aware banality of Satie's music portended a new covenant between artist and audience, liberating both from the burdens of interpretation. Satie had relinquished the apparatus of musical profundity: the trappings of developmental forms, harmonic movement, and expressive phrasing. In their stead, he created a music of inexpressive and almost meaningless sounds—a medium to cultivate what Cage, echoing Ramakrishna, called a "sober and calm" mind.

Over the course of the 1948 summer session, Cage mimicked a Dadaist sendup of artistic professionalism by producing an "amateur festival" devoted almost exclusively to Satie's music: twenty-five evening performances, roughly a half hour each, with Cage himself, a pianist of limited means, as principal performer. Knowing that this would seem an incongruous representation of modernism to the cultivated German émigrés and Abstract Expressionist enthusiasts at Black Mountain, Josef Albers had asked Cage to offer explanatory introductions to the concerts. The surviving record of these talks is Cage's "Defense of Satie," published two decades later in Richard Kostelanetz's anthology *John Cage*.[2]

Cage knew that he had walked into a lion's den. He called the proceedings to order by sketching a sardonic portrait of the artist as a solitary modern man, trapped in a stressful conundrum: originality itself was the source of the artist's loneliness: "We go so far as to give some credence to the opinion that a special kind of art arises from a special neurosis pattern of a particular artist," he wrote. "At this point we grow slightly pale and stagger out of our studios to knock at the door of some neighborhood psychoanalyst."[3] The tone is ironic and the attitude distanced rather than confessional. Cage's own arduous path past *The Perilous Night* appeared only through a rearview mirror. As the lecture progressed, however, Cage grew more deliberative, arguing his case for a transcendent solution to the dilemmas of modernism by reconstructing the foundations of music from scratch. And then he offered a closing benediction:

> Good music can act as a guide to good living. The solution of rhythmic structure, traditional to the Orient, is arrived at with us just at the time that we profoundly sense our need for that other tradition of the Orient: peace of mind, self-knowledge.[4]

On the way to this peroration, however, Cage had laid a dense minefield of provocations and polemics, guaranteed to perplex his audience. Neoclassicism was an affront to nature; Schoenberg and Stravinsky ("the composers of our period ordinarily given the laurels I now wish to bestow elsewhere") were overrated and pretentious purveyors of "length and impressiveness"; tonal harmony was an unfortunate residue of Western materialism. And at the climax, he let loose: "Beethoven was in error, and his influence, which has been as extensive as it is lamentable, has been deadening to the art of music."[5] This salvo must have been aimed at his most obvious, but certainly not only, antagonist in the audience: Erwin Bodky, a Prussian-émigré musicologist on the faculty, who happened to be teaching an intensive course on the late Beethoven string quartets concurrent with the Satie fest.

The ranting that erupts in Cage's "Defense" reflects a conflicted mind-set and unresolved feelings regarding the relationship between rational argumentation and spiritual transcendence. Cage would develop new ways both to confound that relationship as he explored the potentialities of chance and indeterminacy in the ensuing years and to persuade his audience to become coperformers—that is, to take an existential leap alongside him. When he returned to Black Mountain four years later, in 1952, he would be ready to stage his *Theater Piece No. 1*.

1. John Cage, "An Autobiographical Statement," 1990, http://www.johncage.org/autobiographical_statement.html, accessed October 25, 2014.
2. *John Cage: An Anthology*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), 77–84.
3. Ibid., 78.
4. Ibid., 84.
5. Ibid., 81.

Clemens Kalischer, *John Cage at Piano*, 1948. Gelatin silver print, 10 x 8 inches.
Collection of the artist.

CERAMICS AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE, 1949–1956

CINDI STRAUSS

Karen Karnes and David Weinrib outside the pot shop, n.d. Photo by Edward Dupuy.

Robert Turner wedging clay, n.d.

David Weinrib working on slab ceramic, n.d. Photo by Edward Dupuy.

While Black Mountain College encouraged interdisciplinary studies, and while craft, by way of the weaving program, played a significant role in the school's curriculum, Josef Albers had not been in favor of adding ceramics as a discipline during his tenure as rector. Evidently, he did not consider clay a suitable material for students to work with because it did not offer rigor and consisted of "ashtray art."[1] However, in 1949, student interest and the support of Charles Olson sparked the college to invite the Alfred University–trained potter Robert Turner to inaugurate a pottery program. At the time, the college was in flux; Albers had resigned earlier that year. Turner was left alone for the most part and did not engage in Black Mountain's divisive politics. "I was too involved with what I was making and the mechanics of getting a shop built and a kiln. It was not a time of discovery so much as consolidation of what I had learned [at Alfred]."[2]

The pot shop, located in a field behind the Studies Building, was designed and built by the architect Paul Williams in consultation with Turner. Conceiving the facility as a production pottery, Turner aimed to teach his students, including poet M. C. Richards, the value of good craftsmanship in industrial production, as well as to create his own wheel-thrown, classically shaped, and subtly glazed work-for-sale. By the spring of 1951, however, Turner had resigned from Black Mountain, due to family concerns and a lack of predictable time for him in the pot shop. Though he did not understand or embrace the experimental ethos of Black Mountain while he was in residence there, he later remarked that the college's artistic philosophy and intellectualism affected his perceptions in the following years.[3]

In the wake of Turner's departure, Olson contacted three eminent potters, Bernard Leach, Marguerite Wildenhain, and Charles Harder, for recommendations in the search for a successor. Wildenhain and Warren MacKenzie, a Leach disciple from Minnesota, were offered the position, but each declined. Harder then proposed the Alfred potters Karen Karnes and David Weinrib, who were hired for summer 1952 to assume Turner's responsibilities and to oversee the upcoming Pottery Seminar, which was scheduled for that October. As Alfred-trained artists, Karnes and Weinrib shared Turner's focus on production pottery, making functional work-for-sale, as well as for use in the Black Mountain dining hall. However, soon after their arrival, Weinrib began to explore the sculptural possibilities of slab-built pieces and tiles, decorating them with brushstrokes, molded elements, or incised motifs in response to the art of his new surroundings. Karnes continued making functional pottery throughout her time at Black Mountain, concentrating on simple forms whose surface rings clearly demonstrate her process. Particularly important to her work's development at Black Mountain was the opportunity, presented by the 1952 seminar, to watch Shōji Hamada, whose Japanese aesthetic and method of working at the wheel impacted her later forms and decorative sensibility.

The seminar was held from October 15 to 29, 1952, in conjunction with a fall Crafts Institute. The official flyer advertised that, for a hundred dollars in tuition, students

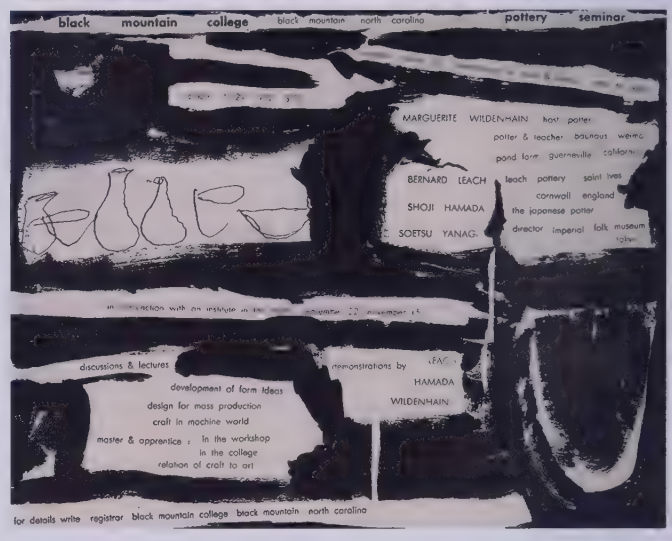
1. See Christopher Benfey, "Karen Karnes: An American Life in Seven Contrasts," in *A Chosen Path: The Ceramic Art of Karen Karnes*, ed. Mark Shapiro (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 17–18.
2. Robert Turner, quoted in Marsha Miro and Tony Hepburn, *Robert Turner: Shaping Silence, A Life in Clay* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2003), 73. Turner had actually lent the college the funds to build the pot shop.
3. Turner, quoted in ibid., 74.

would take part in discussions and lectures, as well as witness technical demonstrations by renowned potters Leach, Hamada, and Wildenhain and a lecture by Dr. Sōetsu Yanagi, the director of the Imperial Folk Museum in Tokyo.[4] Olson had invited Wildenhain in early 1952 to serve as the official host of the seminar, since Karnes and Weinrib had not yet been hired. Seventeen professional potters, instructors, and some amateurs from across the United States registered; local potters, as well as future Black Mountain faculty member Trude Guermonprez and future Summer Institute faculty member MacKenzie, also attended.

The seminar was a significant event for Black Mountain, as it endowed the ceramics program with a national identity that was linked to timely conversations about clay and its role in art and industry. Leach and Hamada, exponents of the Japanese Mingei movement, brought with them a philosophy of elevating craftsmanship in serial production, which resonated with the Black Mountain pottery ethos. Yanagi also introduced attendees to new topics: the influence of Zen Buddhism on Japanese pottery aesthetics, the handmade and ideas of chance, and methods of repetitive production. Because Buddhism was a topic of interest to the painters, poets, composers, and choreographers at Black Mountain, Yanagi connected the college's pottery program to its other disciplines. Additional issues—ranging from the differences between Asian, European, and American ideas of good form and design; influence versus direct copy; and the role of traditions and single "taproot" sources in pottery—offered avenues for discussion and elicited strong debates among participants, particularly Leach and Wildenhain.[5] These conversations were echoed over the following year in the seminars Leach, Hamada, and Yanagi conducted during their national tour, as well as in the pages of leading magazines, such as *Craft Horizons* and *Ceramics Monthly*, among others.[6]

After the seminar, Karnes and Weinrib sought to further increase the stature of the pottery program. The 1953 summer session brought their first opportunity, and they invited MacKenzie, Daniel Rhodes from Alfred, and Peter Voulkos from the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana, each to teach for three weeks. For Rhodes and Voulkos, the experience was transformative. While Rhodes was familiar with currents in painting and sculpture, particularly Abstract Expressionism, Black Mountain provided the opportunity to encounter them firsthand, which led him to begin painting again, a practice that would ultimately greatly influence his later ceramic sculpture.[7] Prior to arriving at Black Mountain, Voulkos made functional pottery with rich glazes, brushwork, and incised lines. Once there, he thoroughly embraced the artistic atmosphere, fostering friendships with Richards, John Cage, David Tudor, Stefan Wolpe, Esteban Vicente, Jack Tworkov, and Merce Cunningham. After a brief trip to New York later that summer, Voulkos returned to Montana and redefined his ceramics; while he continued making functional pottery, his brushstroke and line decoration loosened and became more abstract. By the time he left Montana for Los Angeles a year later, he had fully embraced abstraction and experimentation. The scale, bold coloration, and brushstrokes of his ceramics from 1955 to 1956 signified a revolution in clay art that would alter the course of the field for decades to come.

Karnes and Weinrib left Black Mountain in fall 1954 to join Richards, Tudor, and Cage at Gate Hill Cooperative in Stony Point, New York. Their exodus, along with many other faculty members—just one sign of the declining state of the college—left the pot shop without a leader, though it remained in use by students until the college closed in September 1956. In 1957, Olson tried in vain to sell the shop and its surrounding land to a local potter.[8]



top Shōji Hamada, Bernard Leach, Sōetsu Yanagi, and Marguerite Wildenhain during the 1952 Pottery Seminar. Photo by William Watson.
bottom. Flyer for the 1952 Pottery Seminar.

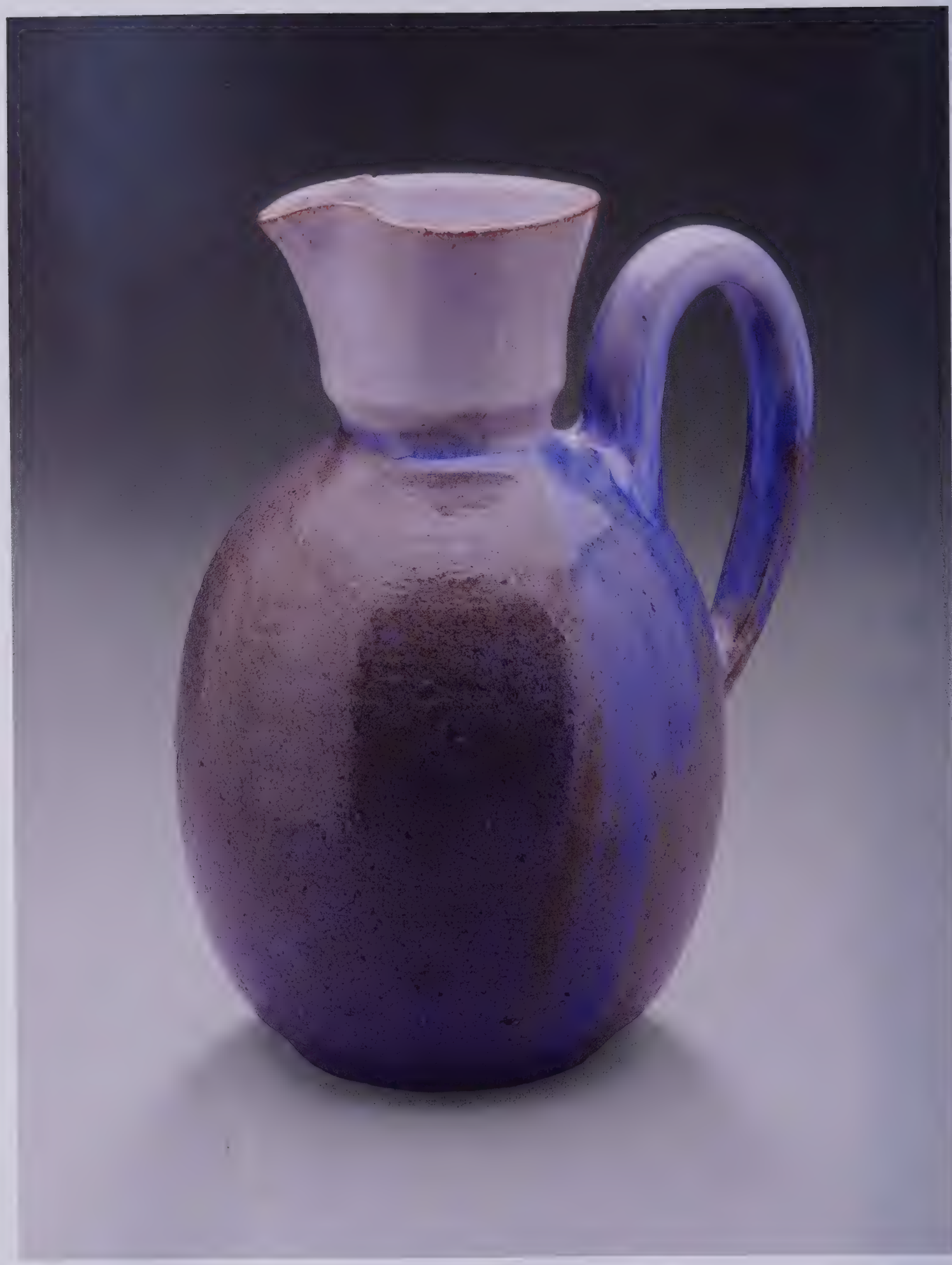
For such a short-lived program, ceramics at Black Mountain College boasts a strong legacy thanks to the exceptional potters who spent time there—many at the onset of their careers. The progressive, multidisciplinary environment encouraged both an individual and a collective engagement with pressing issues concerning aesthetics, form, tradition, and production. Taken as a whole, it seems that Albers's concerns about ceramics were unfounded: the program was not only artistically viable and beneficial to students but also ultimately a vital part of the Black Mountain College story.

4. The flyer officially listed the following topics for discussion: "development of form ideas; design for mass production; craft in machine world; master and apprentice: in the workshop and in the college; relation of craft to art." "Black Mountain College Pottery Seminar," *Black Mountain College Bulletin-Newsletter* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1952)
5. For a thorough recounting of the topics and discussions, see Robert L. Diffendal, "Black Mountain College Holds Pottery Seminar," *Ceramic Age* 60, no. 6 (December 1952): 54–58.
6. See Marguerite Wildenhain, "An Open Letter to Bernard Leach," *Craft Horizons* 13, no. 3 (May–June 1953): 43–44.
7. Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 234.
8. Ibid., 240

Robert Turner, *Covered Casserole*, 1952. Earthenware, 5 ⅝ x 8 ½ inches.

top Karen Karnes, *Double Vase*, 1951. Earthenware, 9 ½ x 13 ¾ inches.
bottom Shōji Hamada, *Tea Bowl*, n.d. Glazed stoneware, 5 ⅜ x 3 ½ inch diameter.

David Weinrib, *Vase*, n.d. Glazed stoneware, 11 ¼ x 9 ½ x 5 inches.



Marguerite Wildenhain, *Pitcher*, 1950. Glazed earthenware, 6 ⅜ x 5 x 3 ½ inches.

Peter Voulkos, *Vase*, c. 1952. Stoneware, 14 ¾ x 7 inches.

SHŌJI HAMADA

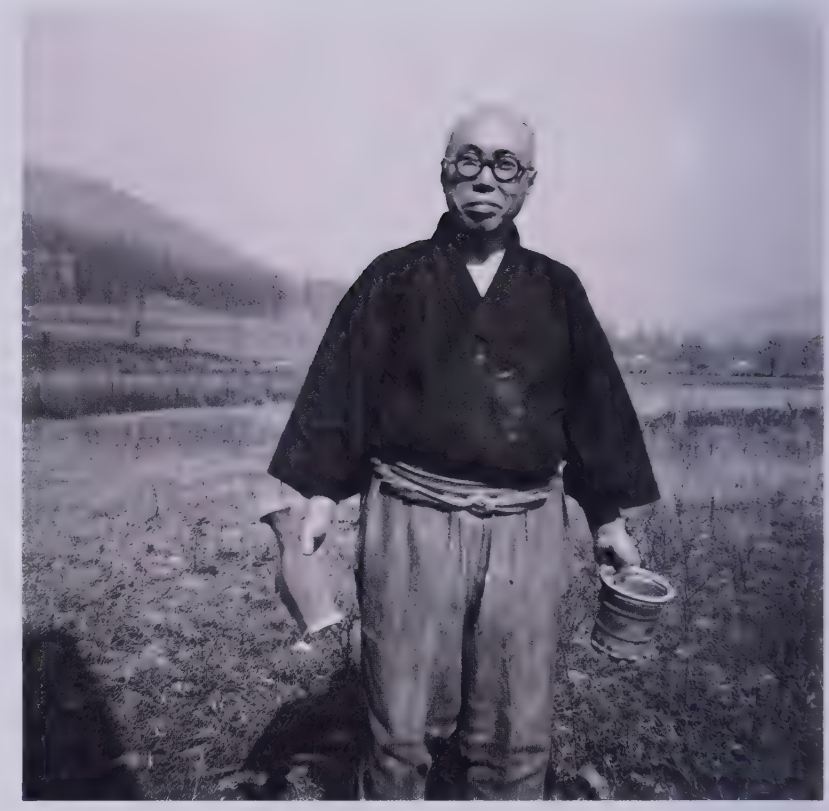
Vase

RUTH ERICKSON

Shōji Hamada came to Black Mountain College in October 1952 for a two-week Pottery Seminar with fellow potters Bernard Leach and Marguerite Wildenhain and with his colleague Dr. Sōetsu Yanagi, the founder of the Japanese folk art movement Mingei, of which Hamada became the most celebrated potter. Like the English Arts and Crafts movement, those associated with Mingei promoted the ideals of simple beauty, hand manufacture, and modern aesthetics in rural life—ideals undoubtedly attractive to the students and faculty at Black Mountain College.[1] Hamada carried out numerous demonstrations at the college, throwing pots, vases, and cups in near silence on a wheel located outdoors. His practice conveyed the importance of "no-mindedness" (*tarik*) in the creative process, a tenet informed by Buddhism and stressed by Yanagi in his writings.[2] When asked about his repeated use of the same designs, Hamada replied, "It's not the same—it is variation on sameness."[3] Rather than sign his pots, Hamada applied the motif of bamboo as a way to render them simultaneously authored and anonymous. The presence of Hamada and Yanagi at the college dovetailed with an interest in Eastern philosophies and religions, as well as an abiding fascination with the relationship of variation and sameness on the part of many students and teachers.

This vase (c. 1950) captures Hamada's consummate skill and his deep-rooted preference for the handmade. He added onto the surface of this wheel-thrown vessel a series of hand-built, raised ridges that form a pattern of rectangular sections around the fullest part of the vase. In addition to their decorative function, these ridges reveal the process of making. After constructing the vase, Hamada dipped the entire piece into a vat of glaze, and the ridges allow the greenish-brown glaze to pool along the edges, leaving an indexical trace of the glaze's transformation from a liquid to a solid. This application of glaze intensifies the haptic dimension of the scaffold-like ridges, as they echo the round form. It also ties the surface decoration back to the structure and the manufacture of the vase, fulfilling one of Hamada's maxims that "body and clothes should go together."[4] In the center of each rectangle, Hamada applied a smear of wax with his finger. The wax resisted the glaze and then burned off in the kiln to reveal a portion of the bare clay below in a shape reminiscent of a leaf.[5] Once again, decoration discloses construction, maintaining a close resonance between the pot's glazed surface and its clay form. Taken altogether, this vase showcases Hamada's widely admired dexterity with glazes and glazing techniques.

Through a hybrid of Western and Eastern aesthetics and practices, Hamada forged a "modern" Japanese style that influenced and invigorated ceramic arts internationally. Part of this history is the 1952 Pottery Seminar at Black Mountain College. Hamada's demonstrations shifted the course of studio-based ceramic practice toward performativity and introduced new glazing and firing techniques, which would directly influence the work of Black Mountain potters such as Karen Karnes, David Weinrib, and Peter Voulkos.



Shōji Hamada, 1952. Photo by William Watson.

1. Yuko Kikuchi, "Hamada and the Mingei Movement," in *Hamada: Master Potter*, ed. Timothy Wilcox (London: Lund Humphries, 1998), 22–25.
2. Ibid., 24.
3. Shōji Hamada, quoted in *Mingei of Japan: The Legacy of the Founders, Shōji Hamada, Kanjiro Kawai, Sōetsu Yanagi*, ed. Martha W. Longenecker (San Diego: Mingei International Museum, 2007), 54.
4. Janice Katz, "Vase," *Notable Acquisitions at the Art Institute of Chicago* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 44–45.
5. Ibid.

Shōji Hamada, *Vase*, c. 1950. Glazed stoneware, 14 1/8 x 12 3/8 inches.

KAREN KARNES

Untitled (Candleholder)

JENNI SORKIN

Karen Karnes is the only American studio ceramist to have both attended and taught at Black Mountain College. A student of Josef Albers and Molly Gregory during the 1946 summer session, she occupied the positions of ceramics instructor and resident potter from 1952 until 1954, along with her husband at the time, David Weinrib.[1] Consistent with the era's brazen gender discrimination, the college paid Weinrib the salary during their two years at Black Mountain, even though Karnes was the appointed instructor. This incongruity was revealed in a letter from Charles Olson to the Bauhaus émigré potter Marguerite Wildenhain:

> A note to thank you for your certain advice on the Alfred potters. . . . Harder's strongest recommendation, in which he was joined by [Robert] Turner . . . was actually Karen Karnes, whose husband, David Weinrib, is the one who gets the official post—this was Harder's suggestion—and we get both.[2]

There turned out to be little need for even one instructor. The pot shop was remote, situated in a field far from the central cluster of buildings on Lake Eden. Few students ventured there, and Karnes described it as being "perfect for the studio."[3]

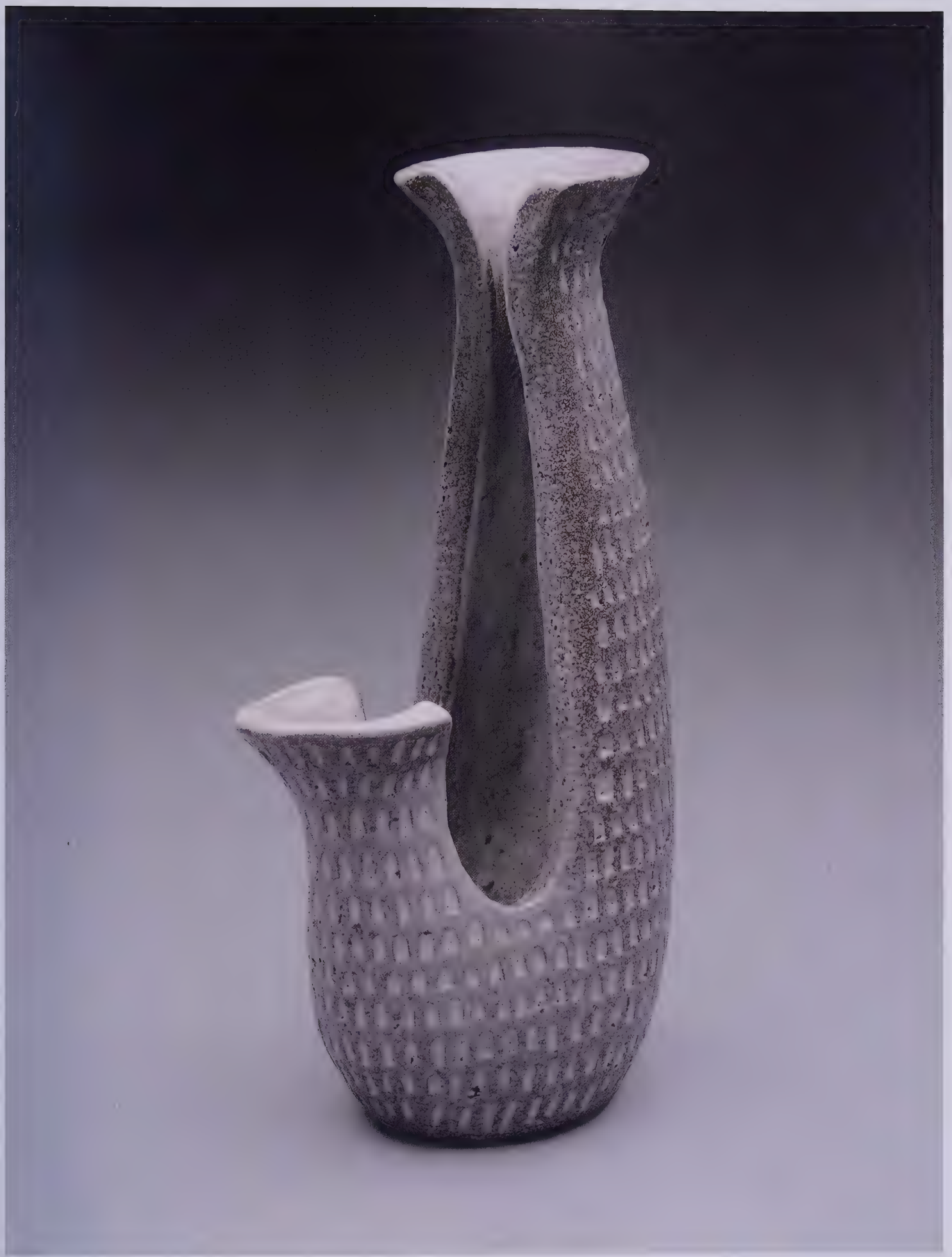
Karnes is a functional potter whose sensuous vessels are renowned for their organic vitality. She approached each of her pieces as an individual expression, with its own set of unique characteristics. The half-open candle sockets, for example, of *Untitled (Candleholder)* (1950) lead into a curvaceous interior architecture. Bilateral in its asymmetry, its deliberately intimate form is intended for only two tapers, stopping short of the additional branches that would transform it into a dramatic candelabra or a ceremonial menorah.

Karnes was already steeped in European modernism, and her eclectic formalism complemented Black Mountain's Bauhaus-influenced ideology. As an undergraduate at Brooklyn College, she studied with the Russian émigré architect Serge Chermayeff, who later became the director of the Institute of Design, also known as the "New Bauhaus," in Chicago. She had also encountered the industrial designer and architect Gio Ponti during a working year she and Weinrib spent in Sesto Fiorentino, Italy, where she produced *Double Vase* (1951; see page 264). The pot was featured in Ponti's renowned design magazine, *Domus*, before going on to win a purchase prize at the Sixteenth Ceramic Annual at the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York.[4] One of the most difficult glaze chemistries to achieve, the brick-red color of the squat vessel is rounded and asymmetrical, with two openings offset by two shallow indentations. Its textured exterior of incised hatch marks looks almost as though the face of the pot is a surface on which to keep score for a game; the bigger side is, perhaps, winning.

At Black Mountain, Karnes worked alongside a peer group that explored avant-garde performance, dance, and theater and included John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and M. C. Richards, and in the later 1950s continued at Gate Hill Cooperative in upstate New York. Karnes and Weinrib were among the few artists who interacted with the vernacular arts community of western North Carolina, visiting Jugtown, the famed Seagrove pottery, and the Southern Highland Craft Fair, where the couple sold their pottery locally to offset their meager teaching salary.[5]

Karen Karnes at the pottery wheel, n.d. Photo by Edward Dupuy.

1. See Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 142, and *A Chosen Path: The Ceramic Art of Karen Karnes*, ed. Mark Shapiro (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 151.
2. Charles Olson, letter to Marguerite Wildenhain, May 24, 1952, series 2, box 17, Black Mountain College Papers, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
3. Karen Karnes, interview by Mark Schapiro, August 9–10, 2005, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-karen-karnes-12096
4. See Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 30, 151
5. Karen Karnes, interview by Mary Emma Harris, 1971, series 4, spool 165a, box 32, Black Mountain College Research Project, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC



Karen Karnes, *Untitled (Candleholder)*, 1950. Glazed earthenware, 11 x 6 inches.

PETER VOULKOS

Rocking Pot

JENNI SORKIN

Karen Karnes invited Peter Voulkos to teach at the last of Black Mountain College's Summer Institutes, in 1953. He taught there for three weeks, on the heels of consecutive ceramics sessions led by two other established functional potters, Daniel Rhodes and Warren MacKenzie, who had each been teaching for some time. Renowned for his nonutilitarian ceramic forms, Voulkos is widely considered to be the most innovative and influential American potter of the postwar period, pioneering ceramic sculpture through his blatant disregard of conventional scale and utilitarian value. When he arrived at Black Mountain, however, his work still engaged functionality.

Four years before he arrived at Black Mountain, Voulkos had garnered national attention for winning the 1949 Ceramic National at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse while still an undergraduate at Montana State University. The prize also earned the young ceramist the directorship of the Archie Bray Foundation, a burgeoning residency program in Helena, Montana, where he would meet Japanese potter Shōji Hamada, British potter Bernard Leach, and philosopher Sōetsu Yanagi, founder of the Japanese Mingei movement, several months after the trio commenced their 1952 visit to Black Mountain.[1]

The summer session offered Voulkos his first encounter with the avant-garde, which proved to be life changing, or, as he put it, "I enjoyed it because I'd never been exposed to anything like they had there. . . . It was so beautiful and so new to me."[2] An extended trip to New York City—his first—ensued, with M. C. Richards and David Tudor. A beginning potter, Richards studied with Voulkos during the session, and in turn, he with her in New York, as she became the conduit to his experience of Black Mountain in its reassembled state in Lower Manhattan. For there, he encountered John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and the Abstract Expressionists he most admired—Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning.

After that summer at Black Mountain and his time in New York, Voulkos redirected his approach. He eschewed the classical tradition of producing smooth, wheel-thrown glazed vessels in favor of a gestural vocabulary, building and heavily reworking raw clay and marring his surfaces with gashes and punctures. *Rocking Pot* (1956) is an unglazed and pierced stoneware pot that rests on curved bands, or rockers, suggesting movement. Other rockers are threaded through hand-cut holes that disrupt the vessel's potential for containment.[3] This instability, which signals a rejection of the core values of functional ceramics, is arguably imported from dance—that is, from Voulkos's exposure to Cunningham's experiments with discontinuous movement.

The culminating expression of an experimental phase in Voulkos's oeuvre, *Rocking Pot* alludes to kinetic sculpture, literalizing the dynamism that Voulkos sought to bring to a staid medium that hewed to traditional notions of technique and skill. A double entendre, the title jubilantly celebrates youth culture by evoking the emergent rock 'n' roll music that was then powerfully reshaping the American cultural landscape; for Voulkos, who was just thirty-one, was literally poking holes in ceramic tradition.[4]

Peter Voulkos at the home of Mrs. Ira Julian en route to New York from Black Mountain College, summer 1953.

1. Lillian Boschen had been the first director of the Archie Bray Foundation. See *Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence: A Ceramic Continuum*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, and the Holter Museum of Art, Helena, MT, 2001).
2. Peter Voulkos, interview by Mary Emma Harris, December 24, 1971, Black Mountain College Research Project, series 4, box 39, spool 108, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
3. For another take on the pot, see Garth Clark, "Subversive Majesty: Peter Voulkos's 'Rocking Pot,'" *American Art* 6, no. 4 (Autumn 1992): 110–12.
4. From 1954 to 1961, Voulkos, as the figurehead of the Otis Art Institute's ceramics program in Los Angeles, trained an entire generation of young men: artists such as Billy Al Bengston, Michael Frimkess, John Mason, Mac McClain, Jerry Rothman, Paul Soldner, and Henry Takemoto. The program attained widespread acclaim—what *Craft Horizons* editor Rose Slivka called the "new ceramic presence" in 1961. Rose Slivka, "The New Ceramic Presence," *Craft Horizons* 21, no. 4 (July–August 1961): 30–37. For a complete history of Otis, see also Slivka's monograph, *Peter Voulkos: A Dialogue with Clay* (New York: New York Graphics Society and the American Craft Council, 1978).

Peter Voulkos, *Rocking Pot*, 1956. Stoneware with colemanite wash, 13 ⅝ x 21 x 17 ½ inches.

M. C. RICHARDS

JENNI SORKIN

Albert William Levi and M. C. Richards, n.d. Photo by Stuart Atkinson.

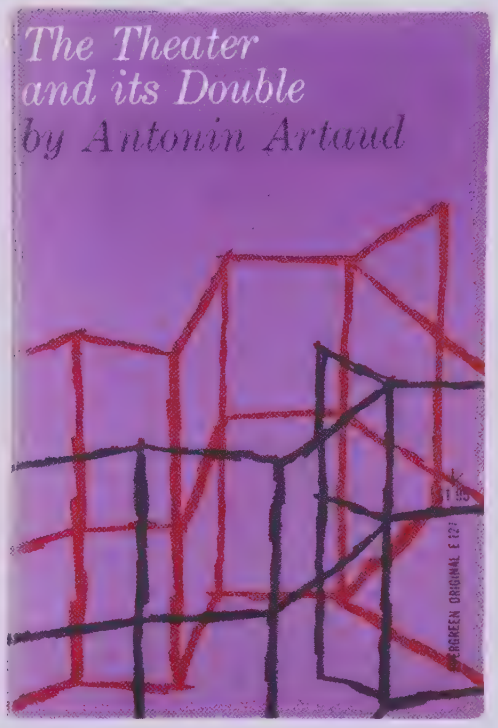
Between 1945 and 1951, M. C. Richards played a pivotal role within the large network of teachers and students who congregated at Black Mountain College. A poet, potter, translator, and essayist, Richards was a beloved faculty member and the only woman on the faculty with an advanced humanities degree, teaching English literature classes, or what she called simply "reading and writing."[1] But her informal, often uncredited contributions and her direct responsibility for recruiting the college's last rector, Charles Olson, also loom large in the college's legacy.[2]

As chair of the Black Mountain faculty from 1949 until her departure in 1951, Richards was the connective tissue between the administrations of Josef Albers's and Charles Olson's rectorships. She was a frank and thoughtful leader during a time of intense intergenerational strife between factions. The Dreiers and the Alberses favored pushing forward an arts-only curriculum, while the younger faculty, including Richards and her then husband, the philosopher Albert William Levi, were determined to expand liberal-arts offerings. As she wrote to the Dreiers in 1948: "Tell me if I am wrong here: I have the impression that you and Albers want to make BM into a well-manicured, distinguished looking example of modern design; that takes money, of course. . . . Whereas, if I had to make the choice, I would rather have a shambly campus, more teachers, fewer students, and less money. Now how do we get together?"[3] Owing to such philosophical differences, both the Dreiers and Alberses left the college in 1949.

In her teaching, Richards served as the bridge between literature and the visual arts, which manifested itself as an intensive commitment to theater, particularly in the absence of a formal drama teacher in the years between 1945 and 1950. She was also a key participant in the student-initiated Light Sound Movement workshop, which produced short multimedia theatrical works using projected imagery, dance, music, and oration between 1949 and 1951.[4] Such experimental juxtapositions of media, perspective, and space preceded John Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1* (1952), often considered the first Happening, and involved overlapping participants (including Richards herself), a practice that reappeared in Cage's work.

Whereas peers such as Cage privileged artistic production over teaching, Richards devoted herself to the growth and enrichment of the Black Mountain community as a whole, relishing the intense convergences between art and life that a radical live-work environment fostered. Steadfast in her antiauthoritarian ideology, Richards was also a student at Black Mountain, studying pottery with Robert Turner and, later, during the 1953 summer session, with Peter Voulkos. As she wrote: "Black Mountain College is a place where everybody is encouraged toward the creative practice of life. Its vitality may yet save the world. . . . The aim is to train ourselves so that we can produce acts, objects, and relationships which feed the stream of coherence and happiness in the world."[5] Through her collaborative pedagogy, she was fully committed to eradicating the traditional hierarchy of teachers and students: spearheading collective theater performances with mixed student-faculty casts; founding the Black Mountain Press, used for the college's literary publications, which later morphed into *Black Mountain Review*, the literary journal that reinforced the college's reputation as a haven of experimental poetry (see pages 346–49); and restructuring the curriculum to maintain financial solvency, using thematic institutes year-round, attracting well-known visiting artists for two-month durations.

Through her influence, the community experienced French Absurdist theater and studied its radical doctrines: she translated Erik Satie's *The Ruse of Medusa* (1913) for its first English-language production, performed on August 14, 1948, with R. Buckminster Fuller and Elaine de Kooning. The play was directed by two of Richards's students: Helen Livingston and Arthur Penn, who would go on to a distinguished film career in Hollywood as director of *The Miracle Worker* (1962) and *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). In 1950, Richards translated Jean Cocteau's *Knights of the Round Table* (1937) and translated and directed his Surrealist comedy, *Marriage on the Eiffel Tower* (1923), performed in June. She also directed W. B. Yeats's *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939) that same month.[6] In 1951, she began translating Antonin



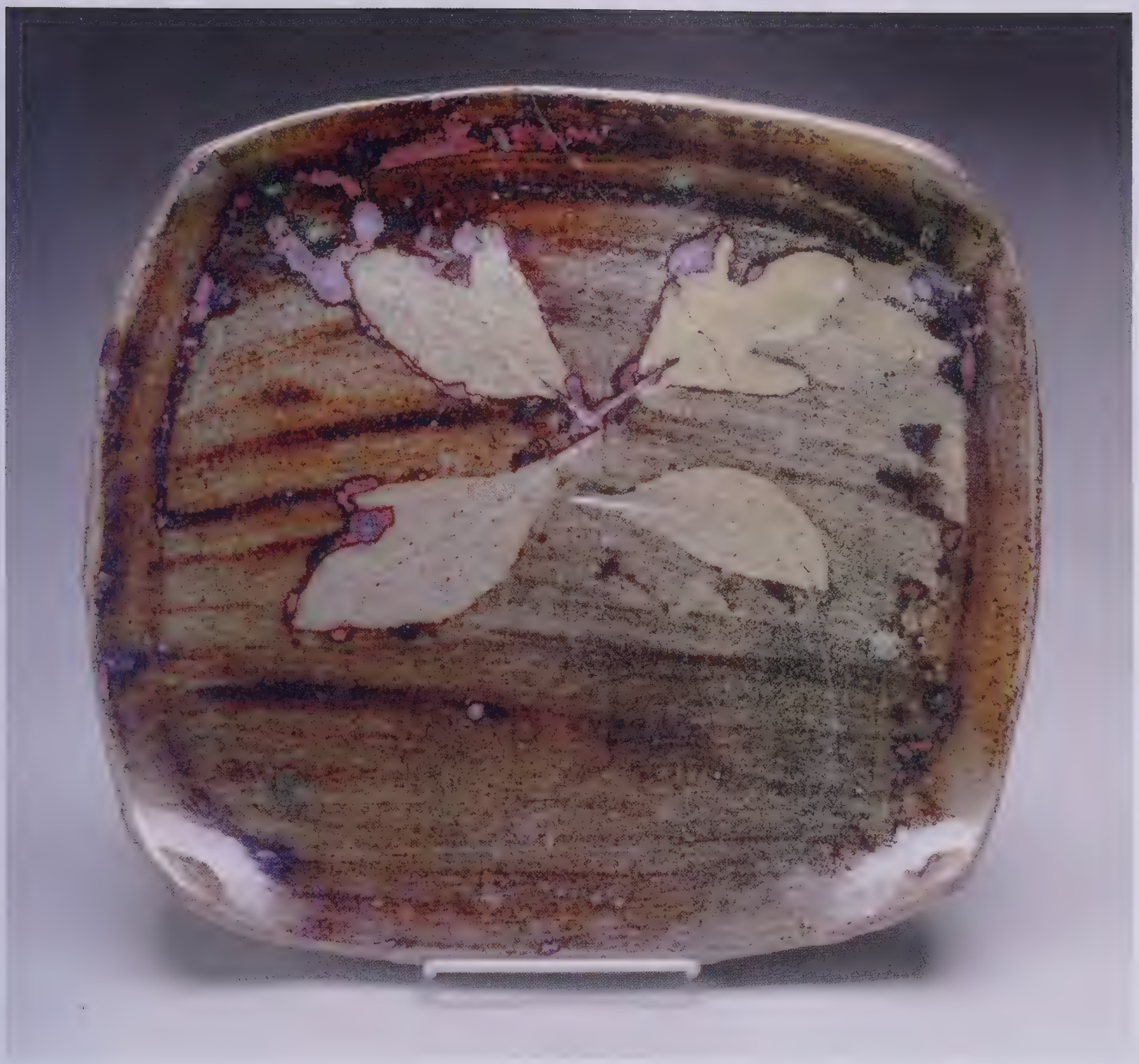
Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, translated by M. C. Richards. Grove Press, New York, 1958.

1. M. C. Richards, letter to Charles Olson, June 14, 1956, Charles Olson Research Collection, series II, box 208, folders 1954–56, Archives and Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Libraries.
2. Richards earned her doctorate in English literature in 1942 from the University of California, Berkeley, when women were not encouraged to pursue graduate studies. She was also far ahead of her time in her interdisciplinary approach to teaching, as literature was invariably detached from both the craft of writing and public performance.
3. M. C. Richards, letter to Theodore and Barbara Loines Dreier, July 25, 1948, Mary Caroline Richards Papers (960036), series I, box 1, folder 5, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
4. Robert Wunsch, who taught drama, had resigned in 1945; Wesley Huss was appointed in 1950. Students Elizabeth and W. Pete Jennerjahn initiated the Light Sound Movement workshop. According to Mary Emma Harris, other participants included Nicholas Cernovich, Mark Hedden, Dorothea Rockburne, and Vera Williams. See Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 206–11.
5. M. C. Richards, "Summer Session in the Arts: July 9–August 31, 1951," Black Mountain College promotional flyer, series I, box 1, folder 3, Mary Caroline Richards Papers (960036), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. See also M. C. Richards, "Letter to the Faculty, 1951," in which she writes the following: "One new thing that we mean to do this year is to have, say, four visiting artists, on 2-month contracts, feeding into our study and experience through the year. . . . This scheme seems on the way to being fit for an abundant pedagogy." Mary Caroline Richards Papers (960036), series I, box 1, folder 4, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
6. Richards's translation of Jean Cocteau's *Knights of the Round Table* appears in the chronology of her life and work, in the exhibition catalogue *Imagine Inventing Yellow: The Life and Work of M. C. Richards* (Worcester, MA: Worcester Center for Crafts, 1999). See also the playbill for W. B. Yeats's 1939 *The Death of Cuchulain* (June 4, 1950), Black Mountain College Papers, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.

Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double* (published in French in 1938) one of the formative texts of twentieth-century experimental theater and subsequently influential to Cage's performance.

Her experiences at Black Mountain inaugurated a life-long commitment to communal living. Following her departure, she was central to the development of the experimental Gate Hill Cooperative, an artist's community in Stony Point, New York, established in 1954 by four couples who had been at Black Mountain: Richards and her partner, David Tudor; the potters Karen Karnes and David Weinrib; Paul and Vera Williams; and John Cage and Merce Cunningham.

After Black Mountain, Richards left her life as a full-time academic but continued to teach and write widely and returned as a student for the 1953 Summer Institute. Her best-known work, *Centering: On Pottery, Poetry and the Person* (1964), became a touchstone for a generation of craftspeople, a poetic and philosophical text that examines the moral act of community building as a form of artistic and experiential education.



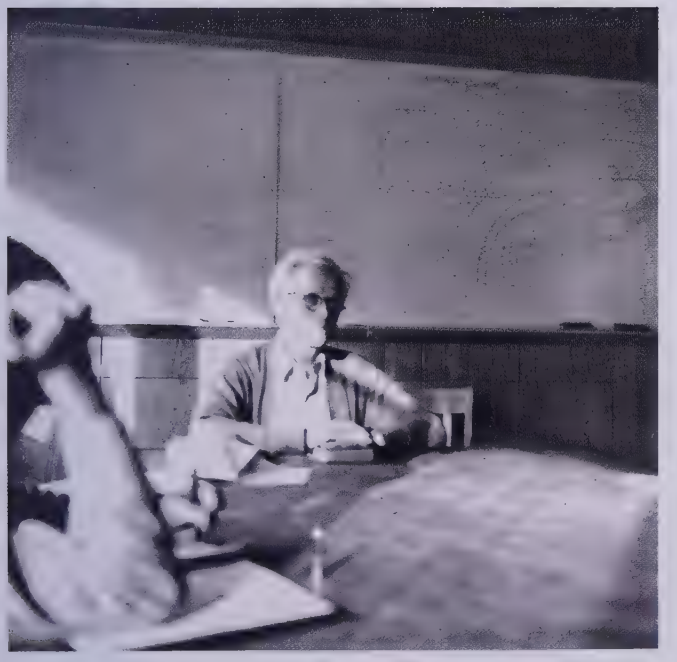
M. C. Richards, *Platter*, c. 1953. Glazed stoneware, 13 ½ x 12 ¾ x ½ inches.

THE 1950s: WAYS OF LIFE

RUTH ERICKSON

Last members of the Black Mountain community with Charles Olson, Joseph Fiore, Ebbe Borregaard, Ann Simone, Wesley Huss, Eric Weinberger, Dan Rice, and others. c. 1956.

top Hazel Larsen Archer, *Susan Weil and Robert Rauschenberg*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 6 7/8 x 6 15/16 inches. Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.
middle Lore Kadden Lindenfeld and Trude Guermonprez at Pond Farm, August 1950.
bottom Max Dehn teaching at Black Mountain College, n.d. Photo by Jerrold Levy.



The precarious institutional structures that helped forge the communal identity of Black Mountain College during the uncertain years of the Great Depression and the dark days of World War II gave way in the 1950s to other forms of community. Whereas the program in the beginning concentrated on enrolling students into the liberal arts college for the academic school year, it had, by the late 1940s, shifted to attracting artists to the campus during the summer. The Summer Institutes reached a heyday between 1948 and 1952, a period bracketed by R. Buckminster Fuller's first attempt at erecting a geodesic dome and John Cage's chance scoring of what many consider to be the first Happening. Following the 1953 Summer Art Institute, Charles Olson was officially appointed rector of the college, though he had been running it since 1950. That fall, the student body dwindled to fifteen students, the dining hall and dormitories closed, and students lived in the cottages and purchased their own food. In effect, Black Mountain became something of an artist colony, which the drama teacher Wesley Huss described as "a community of subsistence dwellers."[1]

The college's publications bear out these transformations. The course catalogues, published annually since 1934, were no longer printed after 1946. These staple-bound booklets—identical in format and illustrated with staged photographs of college life and the seal designed by Josef Albers—had outlined Black Mountain's mission, faculty, and offerings for the academic year.[2] By 1950, the college ceased publication of most official publicity materials, a consequence of varied factors, including the faculty schism that led to the departure of the Alberses and Theodore Dreier after the summer session of 1948 and the drop in enrollment that followed modifications to the GI Bill; however, none of these factors independently explain the profound shift in the institution's founding framework.[3] Printed matter of other kinds nonetheless proliferated in the 1950s. Students and faculty used the print shop to make announcements for one another's concerts and performances, at least one of which—promoting a concert by David Tudor in 1953—was notoriously printed on cigarette paper to be rolled with tobacco and smoked, an act that signals the ethos of chance and ephemerality increasingly embraced at the college.[4] Visual artists and poets collaborated on pamphlets, broadsides, and chapbooks, printing them in small quantities, sometimes only enough to distribute in class for discussion.

1. Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 174

2. Regular printed bulletins and newsletters supplemented the course catalogues.

3. In addition to these founding faculty, Charlotte Schlesinger and Trude Guermonprez departed. This exodus led to a more American and younger faculty demographic that was more closely connected to urban centers, especially New York. The student body also underwent a major transformation during this time. While World War II had pulled male students away from the college, the GI Bill paid for many young men to attend Black Mountain College in the mid- to late 1940s, including Kenneth Noland, John Urbain, Robert Rauschenberg, and Dan Rice. But the 1950 change to the bill's pay structure meant that money went directly to the veterans rather than to the schools, which led to a drop in enrollment. Student enrollment went from about ninety in 1947–48 to forty-four in fall 1949 to nine in fall 1954. See Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 175.

4. Student Tommy Jackson printed these cigarette papers for a July 4, 1953, concert. The announcement is one of many objects held in the Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC. Remy Charlip recalled printing a program on cigarette papers in 1952 for a concert by John Cage: "I went to the print shop and set the whole text in the smallest possible type (8 pt). The type was so small, I had to use a magnifying glass and tweezers, and yet it filled the cigarette paper I printed it on. When I stacked all the programs up on the table near the entrance, they were less than a half an inch high. I placed matches and a bowl of tobacco next to them on the table. I arranged the seats in a circle looking in, with an ashtray on each seat, so that the audience could smoke their programs as they listened to the program." Remy Charlip quoted in Mary Emma Harris, *Remembering Black Mountain College* (Black Mountain, NC: Black Mountain Press, 1996), 83.

Fielding Dawson, *Cy Twombly at Black Mountain*, 1951. Casein on butcher paper, 50 x 24 inches.

Many students named their presses at Black Mountain, including Joel Oppenheimer (Sad Devil Press), Carroll Williams (Black Cat Press), Tommy Jackson (Grapnel Press), Nicholas Cernovich (Black Mountain Graphics Workshop), and Stan VanDerBeek (One-Thumb Press).[5] The arc of printing reflected the state of Black Mountain as it changed from a liberal arts college seeking to establish itself as an institution of progressive education to a place for individuals to pursue impassioned projects and provisional unions.

Even though the decade is often considered a period of decline for Black Mountain, the 1950s produced many of the most renowned artworks, artists, and partnerships to emerge from the college.[6] These included Robert Rauschenberg's Black and White Paintings, the first Happening, the foundation of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, the establishment of the pot shop and the Pottery Seminar, and the correspondence of Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, as well as the intimate relationships between M. C. Richards and David Tudor, Ray Johnson and Richard Lippold, and Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly. A degree of dislocation marks much of this activity, often unfolding—whether through preference or necessity—in places far from North Carolina. Cunningham formed his eponymous company at the college with seven dancers whom he brought from New York. Olson wrote to Creeley while on sabbatical in Mexico. Rauschenberg and Lippold each arrived at Black Mountain with their wives and ultimately left with new partners: Rauschenberg and Twombly traveled around Italy and Spain, and Lippold shared a studio with Johnson in New York. For these individuals, the college provided the respite—a physical space, a cover, or a stopover—needed to depart anew. Recalling his own decision to stay at Black Mountain in 1952, the poet Michael Rumaker wrote: "Perhaps I had found a safe place—a rare enclave in America of that time—for my own queer self."[7]

Of the students who enrolled during this period, many were quite young and only later realized the fruits of the seeds sown at Black Mountain. Dorothea Rockburne came from Montreal in 1950 at age eighteen; she soon met her first husband, the printmaking instructor Carroll Williams, and became pregnant, which left her with little time to make art. Her conversations with the beloved mathematics professor Max Dehn, who "taught [her] to see mathematics in nature," would subsequently inspire her much-celebrated painting.[8] Basil King entered the college in 1951 at sixteen years old and stayed until 1956, studying painting with Joseph Fiore and poetry with Charles Olson; their influence had a direct impact on the development of King's oeuvre, as is evident in such projects as *Mirage* (2003), his epic autobiographical poem on painting.[9] John Chamberlain arrived in summer 1955 from the Art Institute of Chicago with his friend Gerald Van de Wiele. Although Chamberlain brought along his welding tools and stayed on as a sculpture student, it was the lessons of Olson, Robert Creeley, and Robert Duncan that sparked his interest in the visual appearance of language.[10] Given the dearth of college publicity materials in the 1950s, these memoirs and works of art and poetry have come to impart the history of Black Mountain in its final years. While the concentric circles of Albers's seal envisioned a notion of unity, such individual accounts—like the allover canvases of Abstract Expressionism—refuse to offer a single point of focus.

The last known photograph taken at Black Mountain captures something of the defiance that Paul Goodman insists is fundamental to authentic community. Goodman's

Jack Tworkov, *House of the Sun*, 1952–53. Oil on canvas, 51 ⅜ x 48 ⅛ inches.

sexual promiscuity and rejection of binary notions of sexual identity caused an explosion upon his arrival at the college in summer 1950.[11] In his many texts on community, Goodman contends that when institutions and social roles become more important than the people who constitute them, humanity is suppressed to befit the system.[12] Individuals must, therefore, disrupt the system to regain their humanity. In the photograph taken to mark the announcement of the college's closure, sixteen people are seen huddled on a couch and the floor in what looks to be Olson's cabin, the site of his legendary classes that lasted through the night. What is most remarkable about this group portrait of students, teachers, and hangers-on is how few people are looking at the camera. While Olson stares owl-like into the camera, the others look elsewhere: at each other, out of the frame, and down. In the back row, two figures in beatnik black register the new era: he cranes his head to look left (perhaps at the boy drinking tea?), and she reaches to a pack of cigarettes on the table (with a cigarette already in hand?). They not only mark the distance—social, political, and sexual—from Black Mountain's founding but also prefigure the radical social upheavals that were on the horizon. The institution's undoing in the 1950s began with its granting of space to individuals who sought, in Goodman's words, "other ways of life."

5. Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 197. Jonathan Williams, under the name Jargon Press, published *The Dancer* in summer 1951, marrying a poem by Joel Oppenheimer to an ink drawing by Robert Rauschenberg, commemorating a dance by Katherine Litz in New York.
6. Mary Emma Harris carefully reconstructs a series of failed administrative reorganizations and fund-raising ventures that befell the college from 1952 onward and "cast the college into one of its most dismal periods." Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 177.
7. Michael Rumaker, *Black Mountain Days: A Memoir* (New York: Spuyten Duyvil, 2003), 23.
8. Dorothea Rockburne, interview with the author, September 26, 2014, New York.
9. Basil King, *Mirage: A Poem in 22 Sections* (East Rockaway, NY: Marsh Hawk Press, 2003).
10. Helen Hsu, "Fitting in Time: A Chronology," in *John Chamberlain: Choices*, ed. Susan Davidson (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2012), 194.
11. Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (1972; repr., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 347–51.
12. See Paul Goodman and Percival Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947); and Paul Goodman, *The Community of Scholars* (New York: Random House, 1962).

LOU HARRISON

Rapunzel

MARTIN BRODY

Having crash-landed in the psychoanalytic ward at Presbyterian Hospital in New York four years before decamping to Black Mountain College, Lou Harrison was perhaps the most emblematic of all the broken souls who saw the school as a site for a restorative work cure. When he arrived at the shores of Lake Eden in August 1951, his distress was still acute. Two months later, he had completed the piano-vocal score for a fifty-five-minute opera, a nearly verbatim setting of William Morris's 1858 prolix poetic rendering of the Grimm fable "Rapunzel."

Harrison discovered Morris through an interest in calligraphy, and the polymath artist quickly became a paragon for the young composer. He described Morris as a "mad and marvelous genius who had terrible emotional troubles, which he tried to solve largely by overworking."[1] Harrison surely identified with Morris's nostalgic utopianism and the promises it held: release from personal angst, a refuge from social injustice, and a cure for the discontents of modernism, aesthetic and otherwise.

Nonetheless, Morris's poem, with its archaic diction, florid imagery, long-winded monologues, and desultory story line, was an unlikely choice for a dodecaphonic opera. The symmetrical imprisonments of Morris's forlorn protagonists (a pacifist prince locked inside a hero's armor and a lovelorn princess trapped in a cold tower) must have struck various chords with Harrison, a pacifist and an openly homosexual man who not only acutely felt the pressures of compulsory heterosexuality but also had not yet entirely worked out the hydraulics of gender.

It's difficult to think of another tortured artist whose psychic distress and aesthetic struggles were as isomorphic in structure or productively intertwined as Harrison's. *Rapunzel* can be heard, for example, as an exercise in reconciling the composer's deep engagement with Schoenbergian twelve-tone techniques and his burgeoning sense that equal temperament (a structural precondition of that music) could easily become an instrument of repressive Western hegemony and an enemy of social and cultural diversity. He wrestles with this incongruity in the music accompanying the protagonists' ruminative opening monologues. By segmenting a twelve-tone row into two parts—a single sustained tone that represents contemplative inaction and a set of mercurial figures that evoke a ruminating mind—Harrison also raises radical questions about musical fundamentals: tunings, harmony, and developmental forms tout court.

Harrison's recreation of Morris's "Rapunzel" also acoustically projects the poem's latent subjective/psychic structure. The opera involves three voices and two characters, but only one psyche. For the first half of the piece, its two protagonists, a soprano and baritone, sing brooding solos in pristine alternation. The principals finally address each other directly in the fourth of the opera's six brief acts, where they at last call each other by name and find their mojo. In the opera's triumphant peroration, however, the principals, in alternating solos, revert to their previous mode of disengagement. And the witch, even while banished to hell, regains her function as spoiler—disrupting the musical progress toward a final cadence and ending the opera with an unsettling curse.

Performances of *Rapunzel* have been few and far between, but the opera had one unlikely public success. Its third act, an extended solo aria for soprano, won one of three Twentieth Century Masterpiece Festival prizes at La Musica nel XX Secolo, a grand festival of modern and contemporary music sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, held in Rome during April 1954. Harrison won 2,500 Swiss francs and received a smashing performance by the dazzling soprano Leontyne Price. The 1954 Rome Festival and its Masterpiece Festival Prize were sponsored by the Farfield Foundation, which was later revealed to be a CIA front. Whether or not the utopian Harrison ever became aware of his passive contribution to the cultural Cold War, he had already moved on, to the West Coast and the Pacific horizon of Indonesian music.

1. Lou Harrison, interview with Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, quoted in Leta E. Miller, "Method and Madness in Lou Harrison's *Rapunzel*," *Journal of Musicology* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2002), 85–124. Miller's article details the story of Harrison's mental illness, his encounter with the work of Morris, and the conception and structure of *Rapunzel*.

Jonathan Williams, *Lou Harrison, Black Mountain College*, 1951.
Gelatin silver print, 8 7/8 x 8 7/8 inches.

THEODOROS STAMOS

North Carolina Landscape

HARRY COOPER

Born in 1922 in New York City, Theodoros Stamos was the son of Greek immigrants. As a teenager, he took classes at the American Artists School, where Joseph Solman, a member of the group of expressionist painters known as the Ten, became his mentor. Solman encouraged Stamos to study the work of Arthur Dove at Alfred Stieglitz's gallery and introduced the young artist to Milton Avery.

In his first gallery exhibition, organized by Betty Parsons in 1943, Stamos showed colorful, expressive landscapes. His art soon took a turn toward Surrealist mythmaking, influenced by his Greek heritage, the art of Joan Miró, and his friendship with Barnett Newman and Adolph Gottlieb. By the midforties, the young Stamos had found considerable success: his work was included in the Whitney Annual, and New York's Museum of Modern Art purchased a painting. In the next few years, he traveled to New Mexico, the Pacific Northwest, and Europe, meeting Mark Tobey, Clyfford Still, and Mark Rothko, who became one of his closest friends. However, the Rothko connection would eventually come back to haunt him: after Rothko's suicide in 1970, Stamos became one of the estate's three executors, all of whom were eventually removed by the courts. His reputation suffered, but Stamos was buoyed by the support of loyal friends, and he continued to paint, producing increasingly simple, spiritually inclined abstractions until his death in 1997.

Stamos enjoyed a banner year in 1950. He joined the protest against the Metropolitan Museum of Art's approach to contemporary art (and as a result was included in the famous photograph of "the Irascibles" that appeared in *Life* magazine); he was given a solo exhibition at the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC; and he was invited to teach for the summer at Black Mountain College. Stamos later recalled two paintings he produced there, *Beyond the Mountains, Number 1* and *The Emperor Plows the Fields* (both 1950). Of the latter, he said:

> This painting was done during the summer of 1950 while I was teaching painting at Black Mountain College. My studio looked over some beautiful farmland and mountains that were almost always shrouded in veils of mists that somehow gave me the feeling that the mountains in China must be similar and ominous.[1]

With its soft forms, delicate gestures, and interlocking shapes, *North Carolina Landscape* (1950) is similar in style to these two paintings (though it is horizontal rather than vertical). By virtue of its title, it could be grouped with them as well, although a New York address inscribed on the reverse suggests that Stamos might have completed it on his return. That summer marks a turning point in Stamos's development. Directly inspired by the landscape around him (he often took his classes to nearby Mount Mitchell), he abandoned the rather literal biomorphic imagery of his prior work in favor of a style that was at once more abstract and more rooted in the perception of nature, however generalized. In effect, by taking a step back to the landscape practice of his youth, Stamos took two steps forward, anticipating his mature abstractions.

Theodoros Stamos with his painting class, n.d.

1. Theodoros Stamos, letter to Franklin Page, 1957, North Carolina Museum of Art, Black Mountain College Research Project, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC; quoted in *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, ed. Vincent Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 121.

Theodoros Stamos, *North Carolina Landscape*, 1950. Oil on Masonite, 36 x 48 inches.

HARRY CALLAHAN

Eleanor, Chicago

ASH ANDERSON

Harry Callahan and his wife, Eleanor, left Detroit for Chicago when László Moholy-Nagy hired the young and relatively inexperienced photographer to teach at the Institute of Design (ID). *Eleanor, Chicago* (1949) (and many others in which Eleanor appears) was made in the loft-like ballroom on the top floor of a subdivided mansion near Lincoln Park, which they rented beginning in 1948. The apartment consisted of a single large room, a bathroom, and a small coat closet that Callahan quickly repurposed as a darkroom. The unusual space served as a photographic laboratory for Callahan, and Eleanor later described posing for her husband's pictures as a relaxed, often spontaneous activity that could take place at any time, day or night.[1]

Made using Callahan's 8-by-10 Deardorff camera with an open flashbulb, *Eleanor, Chicago* is one of a small number of variations, four of which he chose to print. Eleanor's back is turned in all of them, but her stance shifts, her hair transitions from a loose bun to fully undone, and her arms fold out of sight, drop to her sides, and splay out along the radiator. Her poses echo the playful murals that dance along the wall, which were painted by the Swiss artist and teacher Hugo Weber, Callahan's closest friend at the ID and a frequent visitor to the apartment. Callahan later recalled, "He asked Eleanor if he could put some drawings on the walls with a paint that dries very fast. The paint had just come out, and Hugo was having a lot of fun with it. Eleanor did not know what he was talking about, or I don't think she would have let him."[2] In his paintings and his hanging wire sculptures that incorporated similar motifs, Weber sought to infuse his work with rhythm, and his example inspired Callahan to do the same.

Callahan first became interested in teaching at Black Mountain College when R. Buckminster Fuller taught at the ID in 1948–49, between his two summers at the school. When Hazel Larsen Archer invited Callahan to spend the summer in North Carolina, he happily siezed the opportunity to work with a wider variety of creative expression than was possible at the more focused ID, and he found the exposure to music and dance particularly stimulating.[3] Callahan recognized the shared influence of the Bauhaus with Black Mountain College and the ID, but found the college to be more freely and democratically run. Years later, Callahan remembered the school and its disorganized administration with affection: "It was a great experience. It was a unique school. They hardly paid us anything, and they hardly fed us, which they were supposed to do. The students ate up all the food during the winter!"[4] Eleanor and their infant daughter, Barbara, accompanied him to North Carolina for July and August of 1951, and he spent that summer teaching alongside Aaron Siskind, who would soon join him at the ID and become a lifelong teaching partner and friend. Although they had met several times and even photographed side by side, the summer session gave them their first opportunity to work together over an extended period.

Harry Callahan, *Eleanor*, 1947. Gelatin silver print, 4 ¾ x 2 ⅝ inches.

1. Harry and Eleanor Callahan, lecture and discussion at the Art Institute of Chicago, January 1984, audio cassette, box AG29:29, Harry Callahan Archive, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson.
2. Harry Callahan, quoted in *Nude: Theory*, ed. Jain Kelly (New York: Lustrum Press, 1979), 32.
3. Harry Callahan, interview with Robert Brown, February 13, 1975, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-harry-m-callahan-11869.
4. Harry Callahan, interview at the Center for Creative Photography, February 4, 1977, video recording, box 52, Harry Callahan Archive, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson.

Harry Callahan, *Eleanor, Chicago*, 1949. Gelatin silver print, 7 5/8 x 9 5/8 inches.

ARTHUR SIEGEL

Untitled (Nude against Glass Block)

ASH ANDERSON

László Moholy-Nagy taught alongside Josef Albers at the Bauhaus from 1922 to 1928, and, like Albers, emigrated to the United States in the 1930s, where he founded a school based on Bauhaus principles. The New Bauhaus—American School of Design opened in 1937 and after a tumultuous early period was renamed the Institute of Design (ID).

The twenty-four-year-old photographer Arthur Siegel was already making wildly experimental photographs when Moholy-Nagy met him in 1937. Filled with abstract photograms, multiple exposures, and layered and manipulated negatives, Siegel's portfolio illustrated many of the varieties of photographic vision Moholy-Nagy had described in his 1925 Bauhaus book, *Painting, Photography, Film*.[1] Siegel became one of the school's first students, and after subsequent stints working for the Farm Security Administration, *Life* magazine, and, during World War II, an army photo unit, he returned to run an expanded photography program at the ID in 1946. His photography bears the traces of this diverse training, particularly the emphasis Moholy-Nagy placed on treating light as a plastic medium and photography as a tool to manipulate and record its powers.

It was during his years at the Chanute Field army base that Siegel began experimenting in earnest with the layering that characterizes *Untitled (Nude against Glass Block)* (1944).[2] Using in-camera multiple exposures or, in this case, sandwiching multiple negatives together before printing them, Siegel developed a complex and sophisticated style that was at once personal and infused with the bold aesthetic consistent with photography at the ID. Here, as in *Nude and Projection* (1947), for which Siegel projected his own photograms onto his wife's nude body, Siegel built layers of light and form, first in the negative and then in the darkroom. He paired one exposure of a body silhouetted against a wall of illuminated glass block with a second exposure of rippling water, treating human skin as a surface analogous to the photographic print. Moholy-Nagy understood photography as a transitional medium positioned somewhere between painting and film, and the subject of *Untitled (Nude against Glass Block)* shares with much of Siegel's photography a sense of being caught midtransition: between opacity and translucency, movement and stillness.

Siegel left the ID in 1949 after disagreements with its new director. By the summer of 1951, when he taught a two-week workshop at Black Mountain College, his artistic practice was devoted primarily to color photography, and until his death in 1978 he continued to explore new photographic technologies while consistently returning to the themes and motifs that had appeared in his student photographs. Though the work of Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind is more widely known and associated with the institute's photography program, Siegel's work remains one of the best representations of Moholy-Nagy's principles in action.

1. These included the combination, projection, compression, and layering of images. See László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film*, trans. Janet Seligman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969).

2. John Grimes, "Arthur Siegel: A Short Critical Biography," *Exposure* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 26.

Arthur Siegel, *Untitled (Nude against Glass Block)*, 1944. Gelatin silver print, 13 3/8 x 5 5/8 inches.

Arthur Siegel, *Untitled (Photogram)*, 1946. Gelatin silver print, 13 7/8 x 10 7/8 inches.

Arthur Siegel, *Nude and Projection*, 1947. Gelatin silver print, 9 5/8 x 7 7/8 inches.

AARON SISKIND

North Carolina 11

ASH ANDERSON

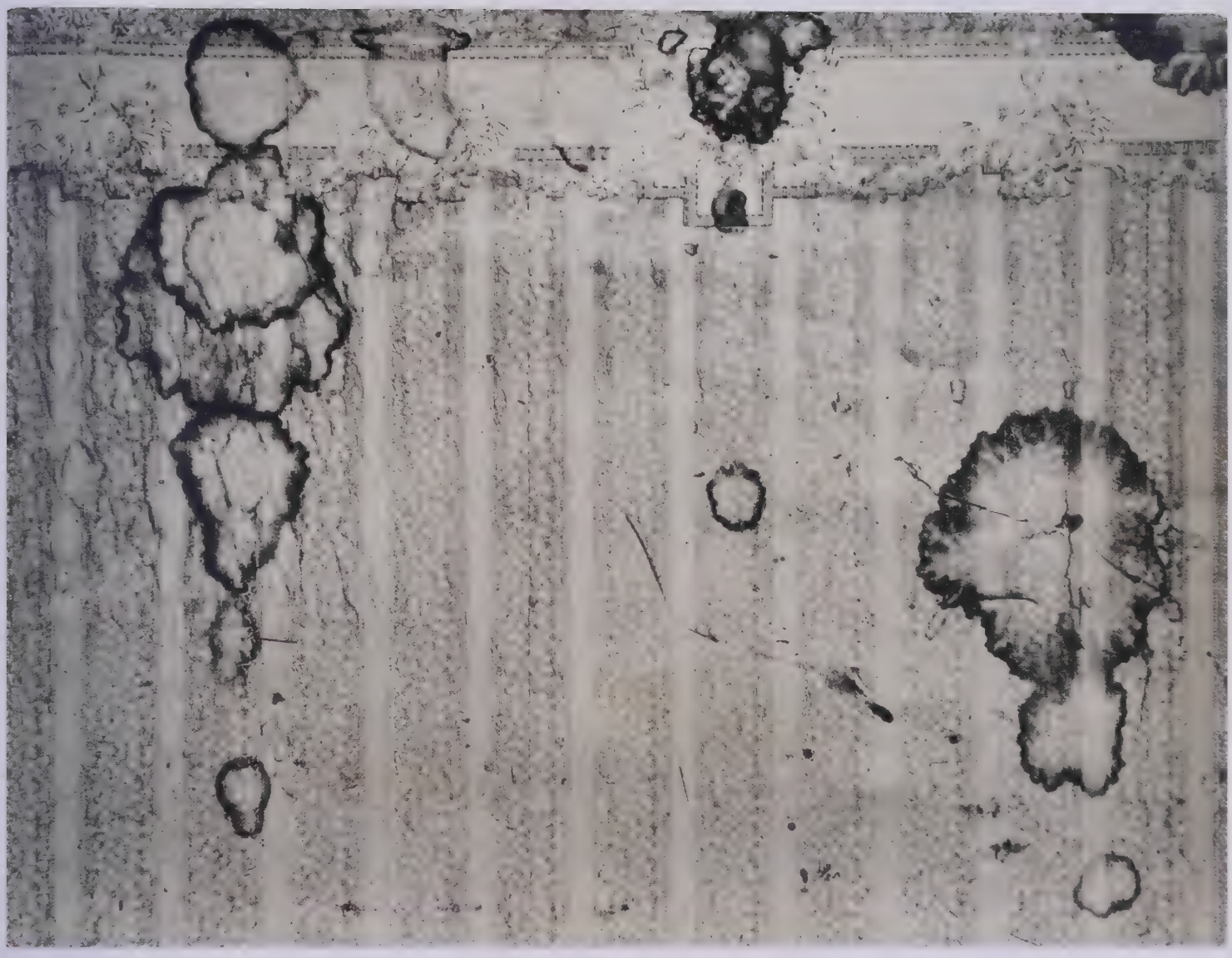
After seeing Aaron Siskind's Martha's Vineyard and Gloucester photographs of 1943 and 1944 at the Charles Egan Gallery in New York, Josef Albers organized an exhibition of Siskind's more recent work at Black Mountain College in March 1948. Siskind was making the difficult transition from teaching high-school English to one fully dedicated to teaching and practicing photography. Later that year, Siskind met Harry Callahan, who in 1949 offered him a job teaching photography at the Institute of Design (ID), the Chicago school founded by László Moholy-Nagy on the Bauhaus model. Siskind had not yet accepted Callahan's standing offer when the two men crossed paths at Black Mountain College in 1951, but the summer was a transformative one for Siskind. He had objected to what he saw as the strict, design-oriented Bauhaus pedagogy, but at Black Mountain he encountered what he later described as an open, experimental approach, where affect and expression were encouraged.[1] After teaching alongside Callahan, Siskind was convinced that he would find these qualities at the ID as well, and agreed to begin teaching that fall.

By this time, Siskind had shifted completely from the socially concerned documentary approach that characterized his photography throughout the 1930s and early 1940s to the closely cropped abstractions for which he has become best known. The pictures he made in North Carolina and Kentucky during the summer of 1951 included themes he returned to throughout his life: intentional and unintentional scrapes, scratches, and marks left on walls and streets, and signs and posters whose legibility had decayed. *North Carolina 11* (1951) is a combination of the two, a haphazard group of torn posters, water-damaged surfaces, and indifferently scrawled letters balanced by Siskind's precise framing. Peeling elements point down from the picture's upper half into a formal dialogue with the folded paper that seems to reach up from its base. The oppositional energy of these two shapes repeat a duality that characterizes many of his photographs, in which one form dominates the other, a dynamic Siskind described as being "like a mother and child."[2] This emotionally informed perspective on the subjects he photographed, what he called "the projection of myself as an idea," accompanied his meticulous attention to surface and detail, as well as his consciousness of the flat plane of the final picture.[3] As evidenced in *North Carolina 11*, he consistently minimized the distance between his subject and the surface of the photograph, bringing compelling textures to the print's surface while flattening the plane it depicts. He favored an intricacy of surface over depth of space, the remnants of ambiguous gestures over expansive vistas. Black Mountain's pedagogy encouraged novel and ingenious use of found materials, and Siskind continued this tradition with his appropriated unintentional compositions, in which the accidental was transformed into artworks.

Harry Callahan, *Portrait of Aaron Siskind*, 1951. Gelatin silver contact print, 10 x 8 inches. The Art Institute of Chicago, Arthur Siegel Memorial Fund.

1. Carl Chiarenza, *Aaron Siskind: Pleasures and Terrors* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 91
2. Aaron Siskind, interview by Jerry Stephany, February 1963, box AG30:29, Aaron Siskind Archive, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson
3. Aaron Siskind, "The Essential Photographic Act," *ArtNews* 54, no. 8 (December 1955): 36

Aaron Siskind, *North Carolina 11*, 1951. Gelatin silver print, 13 ⅜ x 9 ¼ inches.



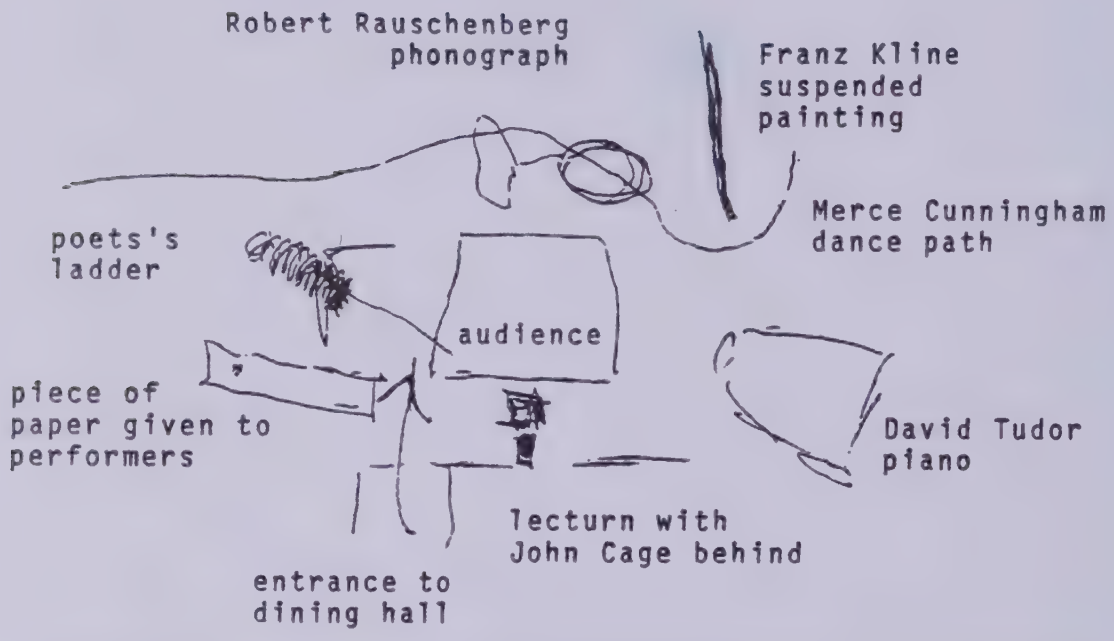
Aaron Siskind, *Untitled (Water-stained Wallpaper)*, c. 1949. Gelatin silver print mounted on Masonite, 10 ⅛ x 13 ¼ inches.

Aaron Siskind, *North Carolina 32*, 1951. Gelatin silver print, 14 x 11 inches

Aaron Siskind, *North Carolina 35*, 1951. Gelatin silver print, 9 ½ x 13 ⅞ inches.

CHANCE ENCOUNTERS: THEATER PIECE NO. 1 AND ITS PREHISTORY

RUTH ERICKSON



M. C. Richards, floor plan of John Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1* (1952), drawn for William Fetterman in 1989.

One evening in August 1952, an unnamed performance took place in the dining hall at Black Mountain College that would, by the end of the decade, acquire notoriety as the first Happening.[1] The composer John Cage conceived of the performance (only later referred to as *Theater Piece No. 1*) early in the day and by evening had convinced Charles Olson, M. C. Richards, Robert Rauschenberg, David Tudor, Merce Cunningham, and Nicholas Cernovich to take part.[2] As Cage recalled in a 1969 interview:

> I simply drew upon the resources of the community. I knew for instance that I could give a lecture with long silences in it, which I already had prepared. And that during that phrase, so to speak, or that duration, that other things could go on. And so I invited Olson and M. C. Richards to read their poetry. And perhaps there was someone else, I don't know. Robert Rauschenberg to show his paintings on the ceiling of the dining hall. And also to play recordings of his choice, and David Tudor to play music of his choice.[3]

There were no scripts, rehearsals, or costumes; participants acted as themselves, reading poetry, dancing, playing music, presenting paintings, and screening films. Each activity began and ended according to time brackets furnished by Cage; the "score" for the projectionist instructs: "Begin at 16 min. play freely until 23 min."[4] At any moment, multiple, unrelated activities were allowed to unfold in the space, embodying, in Cage's phrasing, a "purposeless purposefulness."[5]

Theater Piece No. 1 is, however, rather perverse (perhaps perfectly so) as an origin point for Happenings because so little documentation remains of the event and there is so little certainty of its form. In a place where thousands of photographs were taken and proceedings were meticulously recorded, not a single photograph of *Theater Piece No. 1* exists, just one of the many scores written by Cage is extant, and the college calendar lists simply "a 'concert' by John Cage."[6] In this void of material documentation, *Theater Piece No. 1* has accrued a mythic status.

Much of what we know of the event is through remembrances—and, undoubtedly, *mis*remembrances. No two recollections match. The student Francine du Plessix wrote in her diary that August evening:

> At 8:30 tonight John Cage mounted a stepladder and until 10:30, he talked of the relation of music to Zen Buddhism, while a movie was shown, dogs barked, Merce danced, a prepared piano was played, whistles blew, babies screamed, coffee was served by four boys dressed in white, and Édith Piaf records were played double-speed on a turn-of-the-century machine.[7]

The ceramics teacher David Weinrib reported that Cunningham was chased by a barking dog and that Rauschenberg played popular records from the 1920s and 1930s. Also according to Weinrib, Olson distributed a poem, which he had written in parts, and instructed audience members to stand up and read it, and Richards recited poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay from atop a ladder. The dance teacher Katherine Litz recalled the entire evening taking place in French and Richards "coming in on a horse . . . some kind of movable structure." Carroll Williams, a printmaking instructor, remembered the projection of hand-painted 35 mm slides and colorful collaged gels, and Cernovich claims to have projected fragments of a silent black-and-white film he was working on at the time; differing accounts suggest the projection surface to have been a screen, the ceiling, or Rauschenberg's *White Painting (Four Panel)* (1951). Such variations—and there are many more—result from the vagaries of memory, but they also reflect the structure of the event itself.

Every aspect of *Theater Piece No. 1*—from its component activities to its sight lines—resisted formal coherence in exchange for chance encounters between things and people. The discrete activities of dance, music, poetry, and film took place according to the dictates of the score and the proclivities of the performers. The seating arrangement—most likely, a square of chairs facing inward with two diagonal aisles through which performers moved—positioned attendees amid the action and looking at each other, multiplying possible points of focus and distraction.[8] Audience members could neither anticipate the presentations nor necessarily see them all at once, compelling a shift in spectatorship. As Richards advised, "When you are first exposed to that kind of theatre . . . you might mistakenly think that you are supposed to give each element the same attention that you would be giving it *if it was the only thing going on*. And that can be very stressful. You have to just sort of let it roll over you, and not try to make sense of the individual threads."[9] It is, thus, of little surprise that recollections vary so dramatically. Rather than attempting to pin down what happened during *Theater Piece No. 1*, we might take a cue from the improvised event and shift our energy toward tracing the encounters between people, ideas, and art forms that led to the performance on that warm August evening in the rural South.

Such a search reveals the multifarious ways in which *Theater Piece No. 1* emerged from the particular conditions of Black Mountain College—from its histories, its social contacts, and its environment. A key point of convergence was the French playwright, actor, and theorist Antonin Artaud, whose ideas became a galvanizing force for Cage, Tudor, and Richards in the early 1950s. The initial conduit to Artaud was the French composer Pierre Boulez, whom Cage had met on a trip to Paris in 1949 and who derived inspiration from Artaud in composing his Second Piano Sonata (1948), specifically in dismantling melodic and thematic conventions.[10] On returning to New York, Cage shared his discoveries with Tudor, who set out to perform the American premiere of Boulez's notoriously challenging Second Piano Sonata, a task that immersed Tudor in Boulez's essays and by consequence in Artaud.[11] By May 1951, Cage wrote to Boulez: "I have been reading a great deal

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1. Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959) first introduced the term *Happening* into the lexicon of artistic production to refer to a kind of nonnarrative and nonlinear theatrical performance that entailed the simultaneous presentation of multiple art forms. *Theater Piece No. 1*'s connection to the emergence of Happenings occurred less through knowledge of the 1952 event at Black Mountain and more widely via John Cage's experimental composition classes at the New School for Social Research, which many artists associated with Fluxus and performance art attended, including Kaprow, George Brecht, Al Hansen, and Dick Higgins. Michael Kirby first established the lineage between the Black Mountain performance and Happenings in *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1965), 31–37.
2. Martin Duberman, interview with John Cage, April 26, 1969, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC. Some accounts also list the display of a painting by Franz Kline.
3. Duberman, interview with Cage.
4. John Cage, "Projector score," JPB 95-3 Folder 197, New York Public Library, New York.
5. Duberman, interview with Cage.
6. The Black Mountain College calendar lists a "concert" by John Cage held August 16, 1952, which may have been the date of the performance. William Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), 98.
7. Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (1972; repr., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 372–77. All of the recollections discussed are from Duberman's interviews and book.
8. See M. C. Richards's sketch of the seating arrangement as she remembered it in William Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces*, 100.
9. Ibid., 101.
10. Lucy Bradnock, "White Noise at Black Mountain," in *Spectres of Artaud: Language and the Arts in the 1950s*, ed. Kaira M. Cabañas (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012), 66.
11. Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces*, 37.

Students preparing costumes for *The Physician in Spite of Himself*, December 1941.

Robert Rauschenberg preparing unicorn costume, 1949.

of Artaud (this is largely because of you and through Tudor who read Artaud because of you)."[12] Reading Artaud, however, was not easy, owing to the scarcity of English translations, a situation that Richards set out to amend. Richards, who had received a doctorate in literature from Berkeley and taught literature at Black Mountain, undertook the first English translation of *The Theater and Its Double* (1938), sourcing a copy, she recalled, that "had been typed by a musician [her partner Tudor] from a paperback imported by a dancer."[13] By summer 1952, when Cage, Tudor, and Richards were in residence at Black Mountain and Richards's translation was nearly complete, Artaud's proposals in *The Theater and Its Double* inspired their collaboration. As Cage recounted, "Artaud postulates . . . the centricity within each event and its non-dependence on other events."[14] It was this idea of relations between discrete activities springing up by chance rather than through the prescriptive purview of an author, artist, or text that Cage endeavored to enact with *Theater Piece No. 1*.

Although rarely cited in literature on *Theater Piece No. 1*, the legacy of avant-garde theater at the college, if not a direct inspiration for those who participated in the event, had nonetheless instilled the culture of experimentation, resourcefulness, and patience that such performances demanded. As early as 1937, the theater teacher Xanti Schawinsky premiered his play *Spectodrama* at the college (see pages 107–109). Drawing on his training under Oskar Schlemmer at the Bauhaus, Schawinsky devised a stimulating mise-en-scène with abstract costumes of folded paper and colored planes, colored light shows, mobile stage sets, complex sound effects, and theater-in-the-round.[15] These early experiments in theatrical performance helped to shape the college's robust drama program and its production of more conventional plays by William Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, and Irwin Shaw, especially in deriving the greatest visual impact with limited resources.[16] For two Molière plays, *The Physician in Spite of Himself* (1666) and *The Affected Young Ladies* (1659) directed by the drama teacher Robert Wunsch in 1941, the student Frances Kuntz fabricated twenty-six costumes and the set with a budget of twenty-five dollars; she sprayed inexpensive muslin to give the appearance of velvet, silk, and lace, and she used "peanuts, shredded wheat, cotton batting, wood shavings, crepe paper, and mops to create elaborate wigs."[17] Theater became a key site for students to transport exercises and ideas from Albers's fundamentals courses into the space of performance, a leap that prefigured later interdisciplinary collaborations. One such collaboration, in summer 1949, was Olson's class Exercises for Theater, which theater student Mark Hedden cites as sparking a definitive shift away from literary drama at Black Mountain and a search for "a new concept of theater" (which, according to Hedden, *Theater Piece No. 1* fulfilled three years later). In particular, he recalls Olson's presentation of "Wagadu," a myth story inspired by the legends of the Soninke tribe and derived from *African Genesis* (1937), a pivotal early collection of African folk tales and legends.[18] Described by Olson as a "jointure of speech-sound-motion, projection-melody-gesture," the theatrical performance consisted of a reading by Olson, music by W. Pete Jennerjahn, and stage designs by Dan Rice, and it provided a key precedent for Olson's exploration of cross-disciplinary translation in "The Glyph Exchange," as well as the nonlinearity of *Theater Piece No. 1*.[19]

Given the historical centrality of transatlantic migrations to Black Mountain's community, it is of little surprise that other key translations took place at the college. In 1943, the Oxford-trained drama teacher Eric Bentley undertook the translation of Bertolt Brecht's most openly antifascist play, *The Private Life of the Master Race* (1938), with the hope that "the vividness, topicality, and force of the play should make it a powerful weapon in the propaganda of the Allies."[20] Brecht's vociferous attacks on theatrical illusionism preceded the dissemination of Artaud's analogous ideas in the early 1950s. Before working on Artaud, Richards translated two Jean Cocteau plays during a 1948 sabbatical in Paris, and when she returned to the college she began to organize readings and theatrical productions. In 1950, she directed

Hazel Larsen Archer, *Elizabeth Schmitt Jennerjahn and Robert Rauschenberg*, c. 1952. Gelatin silver print, 6 ¼ x 9 ¼ inches.

Hazel Larsen Archer, *Elizabeth Schmitt Jennerjahn*, c. 1952–53. Gelatin silver print, 9 ¼ x 9 ¼ inches.

her translation of Cocteau's *Marriage on the Eiffel Tower* (1921), converting the dining hall into a "total environment" for the performance with the construction of the Eiffel Tower's platform, from which the actors and audience gazed down on a skyline of Paris and on which they ate Thanksgiving dinner before the play.[21] Richards did not officially teach drama at Black Mountain, yet her involvement with it—like that of so many other teachers and students—speaks to theater's capacity to embrace all the arts and to the eventual formation of a receptive history for *Theater Piece No. 1*.

Multimedia dance performance also had a history at Black Mountain College that prefigured not only *Theater Piece No. 1* but also the creation of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. In 1948, Elizabeth Jennerjahn returned to Black Mountain with her new husband W. Pete Jennerjahn to teach dance, and the two invented what became known as Light Sound Movement workshops. Elizabeth, the first of five siblings to come to Black Mountain, had studied art with Albers in the mid-1940s before departing to study dance with Martha Graham Dance Company.[22] Combining this training in the Light Sound Movement performances, she recounts one rehearsal with Cernovich and Tim La Farge: "moving in our green and red-striped tights through red and green saturated light created by the red and green-striped slides."[23] Although no photographic documentation remains, one can easily imagine how the overlay of striped costumes and lights—an Albers color study in other media—would produce a phantasmagoric scene of bodies appearing and disappearing. Many students and teachers participated in the workshops, including Cernovich and Richards, but the only period account of the workshops is a notebook belonging to either W. Pete Jennerjahn or Joseph Fiore with the following instruction: "As two dancers go through simple movements at opposite ends of the stage. Lights go on them alternately as they go through movements."[24] Projected light and movement were to function as independent elements to invigorate one another, a method akin to the disjunctive and immersive process of *Theater Piece No. 1*.

To write about *Theater Piece No. 1* is to ask what created the particular community from which Cage drew. It was a community not only of people but also of ideas, practices, forms, priorities, memories, and things. It encompasses the prophetic meetings that occurred in summer 1952 at Black Mountain (especially between Cage and Rauschenberg), as well as the habit of self-entertainment, the exercise of collage, the esteem of music, dance, and theater, and the expansive dining hall with its hand-hewn wooden chairs that could be arranged just so. Through its existence as an event and as a memory, *Theater Piece No. 1* directs our attention to this "community," to its many independent threads and the manifold ways that those threads were woven together by chance and by intention.

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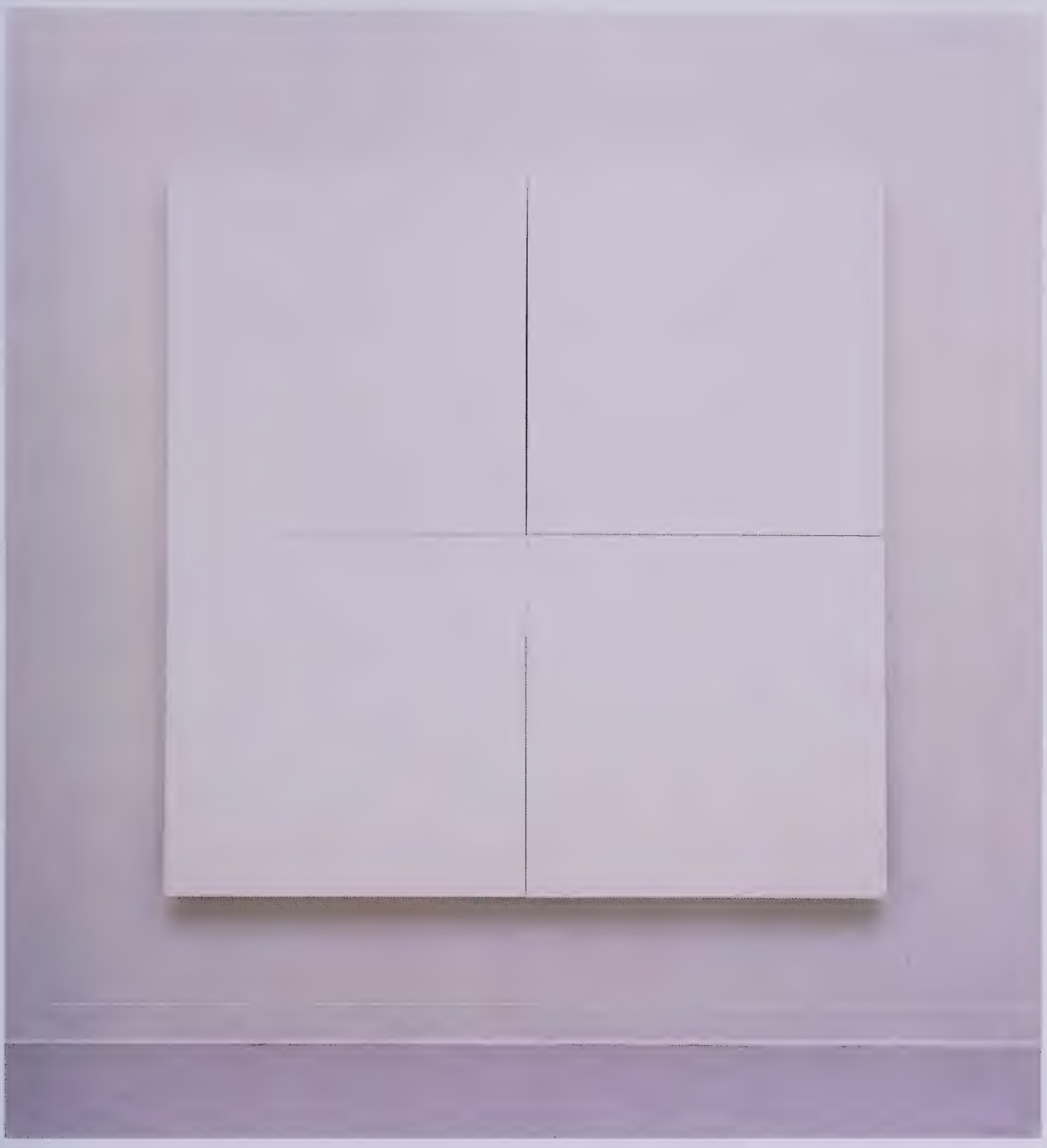
12. Bradnock, "White Noise at Black Mountain," 67.
13. Ibid.
14. Cage, quoted in Lucy Bradnock, "Life in the Shadows: Towards a Queer Artaud," *Papers of Surrealism* 8 (Spring 2010): 5.
15. See Jeffrey Saletnik, "Bauhaus in America," in this volume, 102–5. See also Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 40–45.
16. The college employed a number of individuals to teach drama and theater, including Robert Wunsch, Eric Bentley, Helen Livingston, Arthur Penn, and Wesley Huss.
17. Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 72.
18. Mark Hedden, "Notes on Theater at Black Mountain College (1948–1952," *Form* (April 1969): 18–20. On Olson's play and its sources, see Ralph Maud, *Charles Olson's Reading: A Biography* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1996), 78–81.
19. Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 334.
20. The first English reading of the play took place on February 16, 1944, at the college. See Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 73–74.
21. Ibid., 210.
22. It was via Elizabeth Jennerjahn's sister Elaine Schmitt Urbain that Ruth Asawa and Ray Johnson came to Black Mountain.
23. "Elizabeth Jennerjahn" file, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
24. Notebook for Light Sound Movement workshop, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC. Mark Hedden, who participated in the Light Sound Movement workshops, describes the participants' desire to reinvent theater yet concludes, "We still thought in essentially classical terms." Hedden, "Notes on Theater at Black Mountain College (1948–1952)," 18. Mary Emma Harris lists the following participants in the workshops: Hedden, Nicholas Cernovich, Don Alter, Tim LaFarge, Vera Williams, June Christensen, Richards, Mary Fiore, Dorothea Rockburne, Victor Kalos, Jay Watt, Dan Rice, and Frank Moore. See her description of the workshops in Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 209–10.



Robert Rauschenberg, *White Painting (Four Panel)*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 72 x 72 inches.

FRANZ KLINE

Painting[1]

JENNIFER GROSS

While a member of the faculty at Black Mountain in the summer of 1952, Franz Kline continued to develop paintings that have been described by art historian David Anfam as "the stripped-to-the-bone geometries that distinguish his first altogether extraordinary inventions, exemplified by *Wotan* (1950), *Painting No. 11* (1951) and *Untitled* (1952) [also known as *Painting 1952*]."[2] These paintings exemplify what would later become his signature working method as an abstract painter—remarkably opaque and forthright black-and-white compositions that assert a structural abstraction free from expression.

Though even the generation's most prescient critic, Frank O'Hara, categorized Kline as an archetypal "action painter" in 1964, Kline protested this frequent branding of his practice.[3] He often countered that his method for realizing paintings included making numerous preliminary drawings and that he did not enlarge the drawings but would plan areas in a large painting by using small drawings for distinct areas.[4] Indeed, in *Painting* (1952), as in his other works, Kline seems to use the paint not as a field for demonstrating gestural mark making but to hold the canvas as a support structure for the composition.

Kline was interested in the idea that "immediacy" could be accomplished in a picture even though it may have been worked on over a long period of time.[5] Yet supporting the tenet of Abstract Expressionism that determined that the form of a work could provide a kind of experience or mood was indeed a stated goal for Kline: "When that is there . . . it becomes a painting whereas all the other pictures that have far more interesting shapes and so on, don't become that to me."[6]

In *Painting*, black strokes run along the top left edge and bottom right edge of the canvas to hold the structural tension of the composition. These strokes break the assertion of the two horizontal bands that divide the canvas into three quadrants from top to bottom. The vertical composition has a filmstrip quality, as the interplay between the black-and-white areas hold the composition in tension. A photograph of Kline with *Painting* at Black Mountain shows the painting tacked over a doorway, against the side of a white clapboard house. Poet and teacher of literature, drama, and creative writing at Black Mountain, M. C. Richards included what is believed to be *Painting* in a diagram she made from memory of John Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1*, performed that August at the college. While most recollections claim that the painting suspended from the ceiling was Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting (Four Panel)* (1951), Richards remembers seeing Kline's *Painting* there.[7]

Franz Kline with *Painting (1952)*, at Black Mountain College. Photo by William Douglas McGee.

1. The travel labels on the reverse of all identify the work as *Painting 1952*. In a letter to Charles C. Cunningham, the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, on May 27, 1960, Franz Kline wrote, in reference to this work, "At that time or that year I didn't title the paintings—and called them either just 'painting' and date—composition or left them untitled."
2. David Anfam, "Franz Kline: Janus of Abstract Expressionism," in *Franz Kline, 1910–1962*, ed. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (Turin: Castello di Rivoli, 2004), 43.
3. Frank O'Hara, "Introduction and Interview," in *Franz Kline: A Retrospective Exhibition* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1964), 6.
4. Katherine Kuh, "Franz Kline," in *Franz Kline 1910–1962*, 125
5. Franz Kline, in David Sylvester, "Franz Kline 1910–1962: An Interview," in ibid., 135. Originally published in *Living Arts* 1 (Spring 1963): 2–13
6. Ibid., 134
7. M. C. Richards drew a plan for William Fetterman in 1989 that detailed this memory William Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 100. See page 298

Franz Kline, *Painting*, 1952. Oil on canvas, 65 x 41 ¾ inches.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Untitled (Night Blooming Series)

HELEN MOLESWORTH

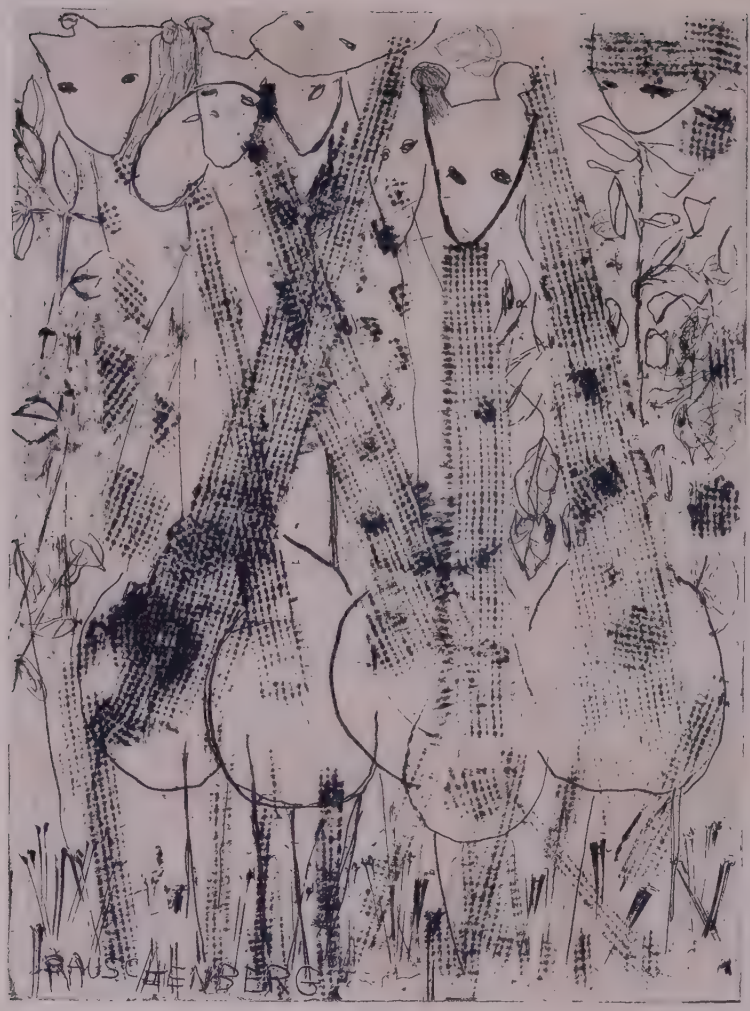
Robert Rauschenberg first arrived at Black Mountain College in 1948 with his then wife, Susan Weil. They shared the coveted assignment in the work program of taking the trash to the dump. According to Weil, they sometimes returned with as much as they took.[1] Rauschenberg's first stay at Black Mountain was transformative thanks to the lifelong friendships he made with Merce Cunningham and John Cage, as well as to the lessons he learned from Josef Albers—even if he was to say later, "What he did teach me was sort of the reverse of what I was supposed to have learned. I maintained my affection for the materials and the physical aspects of art. . . . He taught me such respect for all colors that it took me years before I could use more than two colors at once."[2] When he returned to Black Mountain in the summer of 1951, Albers was gone and the general atmosphere had shifted from intensive coursework to individual experimentation. Rauschenberg would recall "a jealous student at Black Mountain College [saying] to Jack Tworkov, 'I don't know why you spend so much time with Bob, because he never comes to class.' And Jack said, 'When they stop coming to class, then I get interested.'"[3]

Rauschenberg had come to the school this second time with his friend Cy Twombly, whom he had met at the Art Students League in New York. Twombly was painting heavily gestural black-and-white abstract canvases that veered toward biomorphic or fecund vegetal imagery. Rauschenberg began making a set of Black Paintings (c. 1952) that were heavily textured, either through a buildup of newspaper or through the inclusion of dirt and gravel in the canvas. Indeed, for *Untitled (Night Blooming Series)* (c. 1951) he remembers taking the still-wet canvas outside, laying it on the ground, and treating it like an adhesive surface or a light-sensitive piece of photo paper. In other words, the process of making the Black Paintings was remarkably similar to the process used to make blueprints, marrying a highly tactile surface and a monochrome palette. Rauschenberg's interest in using a painting support as analogous to the photographic surface, augmented by his commitment to a heavily haptic sensibility, is interesting given his nascent friendship with Aaron Siskind. The two artists, who were introduced by the gallery owner Charles Egan, became fast friends, partly because of their shared interest in making works that exhibit a strong sense of intimacy between looking and making. Rauschenberg further explored the reciprocity between painting and photography in his rather extensive documentation of the Black Paintings. He continued to make the Black Paintings when he moved from Black Mountain to New York, and photos exist of the works in both locations. He may have been photographing them as an extension of his photography classes with Hazel Larsen Archer, or he may have been merely documenting them, as it seems fairly certain that poverty mandated that he reuse his own canvases at that point. The legendary curator Walter Hopps has suggested that Rauschenberg's repeated use of doorways as frames for these documentary photos was more than a mere convenience; rather, Hopps feels "they suggest human presence and establish a literal conjunction of abstract art and the physical factum of everyday life."[4] While this sentence was not written to serve as a description of Black Mountain College, it functions as one nonetheless.

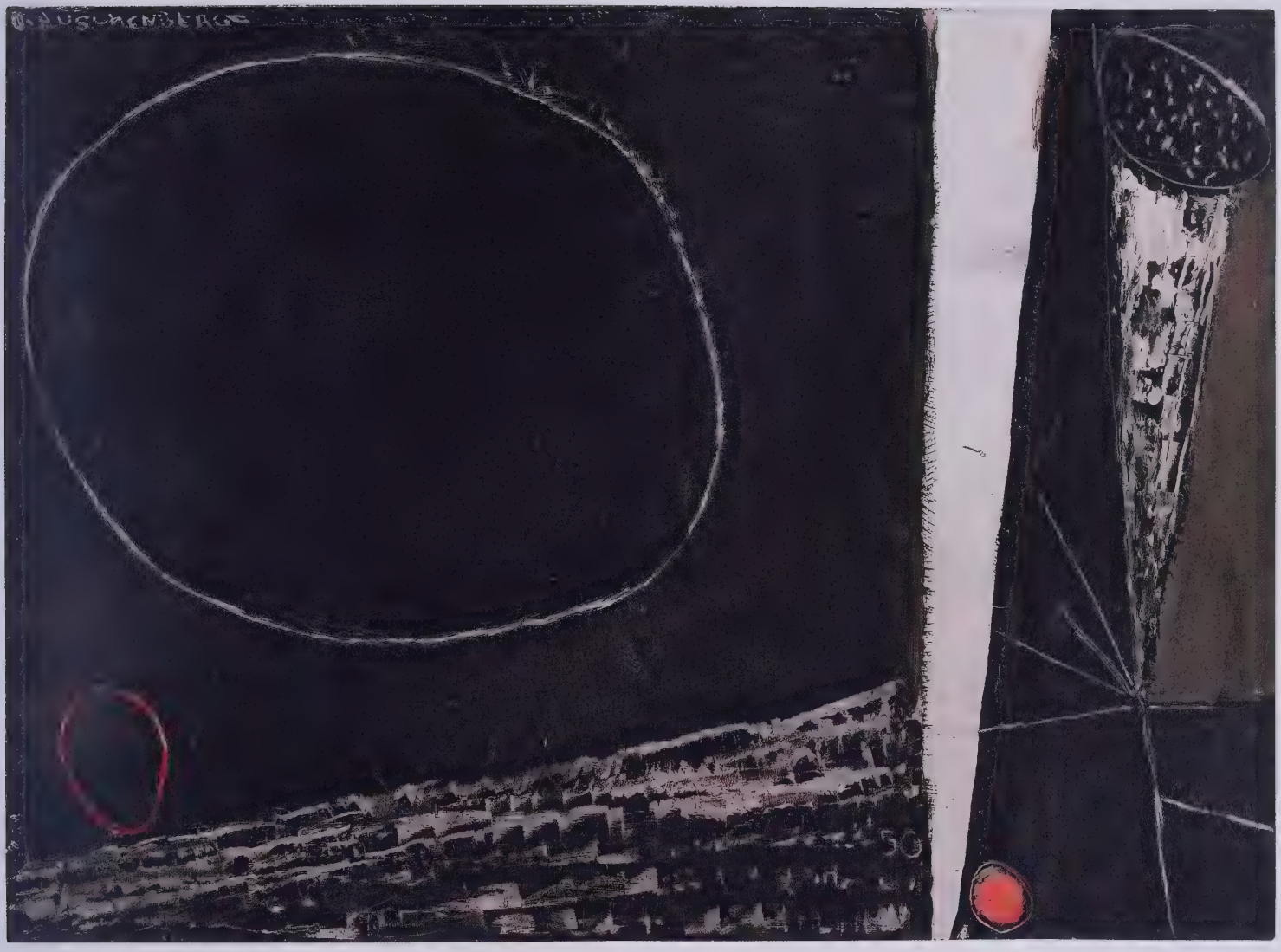
Hazel Larsen Archer, *Robert Rauschenberg*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 15 3/8 x 11 inches. Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

1. Susan Weil, conversation with the author, September 11, 2014, New York.
2. Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in *Robert Rauschenberg*, ed. Barbara Rose (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 23
3. Ibid., 35.
4. Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s*, ed. Walter Hopps (Houston: Houston Fine Arts Press, 1991), 62.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Night Blooming Series)*, c. 1951. Oil, asphaltum, and gravel on canvas, 62 ¼ x 31 ½ inches.



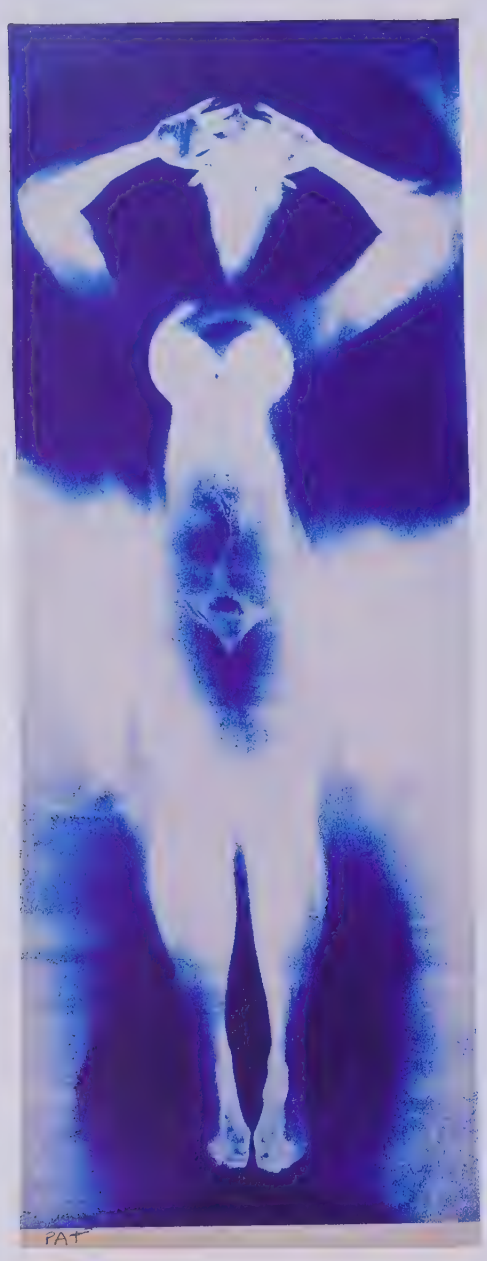
Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Zoo Relief Print)*, 1949. Etching on paper, 17 ¾ x 12 ¾ inches.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled*, 1950. Enamel on fiberboard, 26 3/8 x 35 7/8 inches.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Small Rebus*, 1956. Oil, graphite, paint swatches, paper, newspaper, magazine clippings, photograph, US map fragment, fabric, and three-cent stamps on canvas, 35 x 46 x 1 ¾ inches.

Robert Rauschenberg and Susan Weil, *Female Figure*, c. 1950. Exposed blueprint paper, 105 x 36 inches.



left Robert Rauschenberg and Susan Weil, *Pat*, c. 1951. Photograph of full-scale original blueprint on black-and-white film printed on blueprint paper, 11 7/8 x 4 3/8 inches.
right Robert Rauschenberg and Susan Weil, *Suspended•Shadow•Declared•Eternal•By•The•Death•Of•Time*, c. 1951. Photograph of full-scale original blueprint on black-and-white film printed on blueprint paper, 9 7/8 x 5 5/8 inches.

Robert Rauschenberg and Susan Weil, *Untitled (Susan with Cane)*, c. 1951. Photograph of full-scale original blueprint on black-and-white film printed on blueprint paper, 12 x 7 ⅛ inches.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Untitled (a birthday picture for Hermine)

JEFFREY SALETNIK

The 1952 summer session at Black Mountain College is generally regarded for the momentous occasions of both the first performance of John Cage's *Theater Piece No. 1* (1952) and of the composer's recognition, aided by Robert Rauschenberg's White Paintings (page 303), of silence as the key to his most famous composition *4'33"*.

Another, less celebrated event that summer was Hermine Tworkov's thirteenth birthday, for which she received gifts made by Rauschenberg and his fellow Black Mountain student Dorothea Rockburne.[1] In residence at the college while her father, Jack Tworkov, taught painting, Hermine and her sister were the young subjects of several photographs by Rauschenberg. For one image, he positioned the girls nestled amid a bank of ferns; in another, Hermine is seen in profile, posed before a tapestry of trees and grasses with her hair casually tied back and body slumped. Rauschenberg used shallow focus to flatten the space between the foliage and Hermine, thereby accentuating the crisp outline of her form. His blueprint pictures, such as *Untitled (a birthday picture for Hermine)* (1952) and *Untitled* (1952), which was made with Susan Weil and is strikingly similar to the portrait of Hermine in its equalization of figure (body) and ground (nature), achieve related effects.[2]

For the photogram *Untitled (a birthday picture for Hermine)*, Rauschenberg assembled an array of materials, including small, thorned branches, blades of grass, petals, sand, and a small figurine, to construct a flower-like form that creates an image on light-sensitive paper. After exposure to light and once the materials were removed, the image of their forms remained as white silhouettes against a blue background. When viewed through the lens of Rauschenberg's studies at Black Mountain, one sees how his portrait of and picture for Hermine can be seen as corresponding to the school's methods of instruction, which prioritized perceptual training. The juxtaposition of matter in building the image is akin to Josef Albers's sensory-based, combinative material exercises. Moreover, Hazel Larsen Archer, who taught photography at the college and like Rauschenberg had been a student of Albers's, emphasized "learning to see and [becoming] aware of the life around us" in her teaching.[3] She encouraged students to use only natural light in making their work, as Rauschenberg did with his portrait of Hermine, so as to "train oneself to see light under different conditions."[4]

Cage was similarly trained that summer: Rauschenberg's "empty" surfaces, as sites for the fleeting play of light and shadow, were continuously modulating, performative visual fields that engendered for Cage a profound moment of attunement. Even the simple, personal gesture of *Untitled (a birthday picture for Hermine)* enacts the now historically ensconced sensory revelations of the summer of 1952.

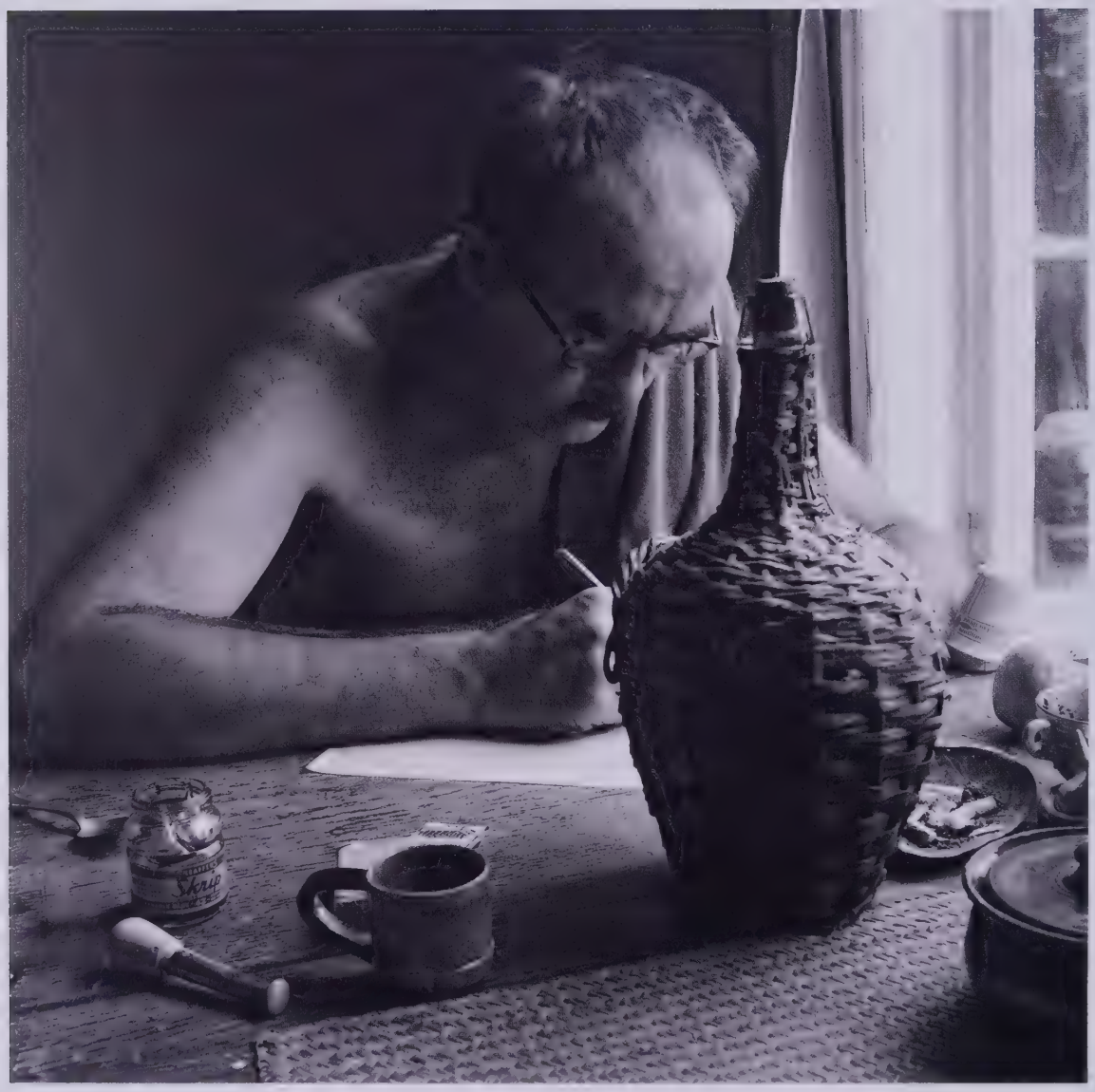
Hermine Tworkov, Asheville, North Carolina, 1952. Photograph by Robert Rauschenberg.

1. See *Jack Tworkov: Accident of Choice, The Artist at Black Mountain College 1952*, ed. Jason Andrew (Asheville, NC: Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 2011), 51n35.
2. For a discussion of Robert Rauschenberg's use of spatial effects in his photographs, see Branden W. Joseph, "Postcard Self-Portrait, Black Mountain (II)," in *Rauschenberg Research Project*, July 2013, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/25832/essay/postcard__self__portrait__black__mountain.
3. Hazel Larsen Archer, *Photography at Black Mountain College*, n.d., excerpted in David Vaughn, "Motion Studies," in *Hazel Larsen Archer: Black Mountain College Photographer* (Asheville, NC: Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 2006), 13.
4. Ibid

Robert Rauschenberg. *Untitled (a birthday picture for Hermine)*, 1952. Solar print, 28 x 22 inches.

CHARLES OLSON

STEVE EVANS



Jonathan Williams, *Charles Olson*, 1951. Gelatin silver print, 14 7/8 x 14 7/8 inches.

Why shouldn't things stop when they're over?[1]

—Charles Olson

By the time Charles Olson arrived, Black Mountain College had entered a precarious phase that grew only more harrowing as the years passed. Willem de Kooning captured with succinct wit Olson's problem when he quipped that the only thing wrong with Black Mountain was that if you visited the school it would be handed over to you.[2] Because the question of who would be up to the task of stewarding the college into a post-Albers, postwar, and (as Olson would famously call it) postmodern era had no easy answer, the ensuing question of how and when the experiment might end was never far from anyone's mind.[3] But then the notion that the college could come to an end—that it need not project itself as a secure institutional space into all possible futures—was written into its history. Its very existence had always been the consequence of an act of will on the part of a fractious, inharmonious, yet often heroic constellation of faculty and students who took responsibility, as directly as possible, for their situation. Therein lies the key: Black Mountain College was less an institution than a situation, and the test of its integrity was confronted anew each year, each term, each day. An existential urgency permeated the place as much as it animated the people there.

Robert Creeley in Majorca, 1953. Photo by Jonathan Williams.

Olson's involvement with the college—he first taught there in 1948 but only formally assumed the rectorship in 1954—coincided with a period of sustained and intense crisis that touched on and sometimes violently refashioned every aspect—erotic, domestic, poetic, and pedagogic—of his life. When he reluctantly agreed to step in for his former mentor Edward Dahlberg, who had lasted just two weeks at Black Mountain, Olson was testing, if not outright breaking, a vow he had made to himself to abandon academia. He had by the age of thirty-seven amply experienced and come to reject the available frames for political and civic activity, including those that defined the Cold War educational apparatus. He brought with him to Black Mountain not only an acute distrust, bordering on bitter hatred, of official institutions but also a craving for some form of refuge and solidarity that was not yet apparent to him.[4]

Between fall 1948 and 1957, when the last lands and structures that belonged to the college were finally sold, Olson produced much of the work for which he is still best known, including the opening installments of his epic, *The Maximus Poems*. He forged the epistolary relationships that were the private matrix for nearly everything he published: first with Frances Bolderoff, who served as his secret mentor and muse; then with Robert Creeley, his acknowledged companion and "figure of outward," who also became his partner in a ferociously focused strategic assault on the canons and institutions of midcentury American literary life. While en route to the Yucatán in early 1950, Olson and his common-law wife, Constance, conceived their daughter, Kate; in the autumn of 1954, his relationship with Betty Kaiser, a twenty-eight-year-old music student tutored by Stefan Wolpe, resulted in the birth of

1. Charles Olson, "On Black Mountain (II): Charles Olson Interviewed by Andrew S. Leinoff," *Olson: Journal of the Charles Olson Archives*, no. 8 (1978): 84.

2. Willem de Kooning's remark is cited by various sources, including Robert Creeley, "The Art of Poetry No. 10," interview by Lewis MacAdams and Linda Wagner-Martin, *Paris Review* 44 (Fall 1968).

3. Charles Olson, letter to Robert Creeley, quoted in Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso, 1998), 7.

4. Olson speaks of the Yucatán as a place to seek "refuge" from what he believed to be soon coming to the United States.

a son, Charles Peter. In 1956, when Robert Duncan mischievously staged *The Origins of Old Sun* in the final summer session, the image of the adult protagonist in diapers (played by painting student Gerald Van de Wiele) managed to allude both to Olson's fervently patriarchal theory of gender (solar masculinity and lunar femininity) and to the very real fecundity—the births and rebirths—that the preceding half decade or so had brought him.[5]

The publication in October 1950 of his essay in poetics, "Projective Verse"—which had its genesis in his correspondence with Bolderoff and Creeley—was greeted as a breakthrough by William Carlos Williams, the living representative of first-wave modernism most respected by Olson. The essay established Olson as the most advanced theoretician—if not yet practitioner—of an oppositional poetics that valued the kinetic, gestural, and immediate forces of writing. "To step back here," Olson wrote, "to this place of the elements and minims of language, is to engage speech where it is least careless—and least logical. Listening for the syllables must be so constant and so scrupulous, the exaction must be so complete, that the assurance of the ear is purchased at the highest—forty hours a day—price. For from the root out, from all over the place, the syllable comes, the figures of, the dance."[6] Olson also advocated for the typewritten page to be seen as a "field for action," a space of direct presentation rather than mediated representation, indexical rather than merely symbolic—an idea, that is, that the page is not so different from the canvases of de Kooning and Franz Kline, which Harold Rosenberg would describe in his famous 1952 essay "The American Action Painters."

Olson's literary polemic was inseparable from his urgent and overarching inquiry into what possibilities for human action remained in the wake of the catastrophes that punctuated the modern period (the Holocaust and Hiroshima) and inaugurated the postmodern. On his return to North Carolina from his months in the Yucatán, Olson delivered a draft of his essay "Human Universe" as a lecture to fifty members of the summer 1951 session at Black Mountain; it would appear that winter in the fourth issue of *Origin* and, in 1954, in Robert Creeley's edition of the *Mayan Letters*. He argued there that the Western "way" of living and thinking identity (a way that Olson saw as extending from Socrates more or less directly to the concentration camps) had driven even the victors of World War II to an impasse that could not be survived,[7] a state of diremption in which "our participation in our experience" is "intermitted" and all "action is interfered with, absolutely interfered with." Studying hungrily the signs "disclosed" to his senses by the vestiges of Mayan culture for "laws" that could lead to "a restoration of the human house," he was in search of "ways to stay in the human universe, and not be led to partition reality at any point, in any way." He focused on how contemporary Mayans "wear their flesh with that difference which the understanding that it is common leads to" and contrasted the "admission" granted to neighboring bodies on a public conveyance ("touch is in no sense anything but the natural law of flesh") with the "pull-away which, in the States, causes a man for all the years of his life the deepest sort of questioning of the rights of himself to the wild reachings of his own organism."[8]

The poem "Maximus, to himself" begins: "I have had to learn the simplest things / last. Which made for difficulties." The death of Black Mountain College, over which Olson presided, was, at the same time and for nearly all concerned, a difficult process of rebirth, a laborious discovery of what rights any member of that *polis* had to their own and to their fellow organisms' "wild reachings."[9] The primary goal in the kind of "human universe" Olson had in mind was the discovery of "ways to end, END, which is never more than this instant, than you on this instant, than you, figuring it out, and acting, so. If there is any absolute, it is never more than this one, this instant, in action."[10]

5. See Michael Rumaker, *Robert Duncan in San Francisco* (San Francisco: City Lights, in association with Grey Fox, 2013), 5; and Lisa Jarnot, *Robert Duncan: The Ambassador from Venus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 155.

6. Charles Olson, "Projective Verse" (1950), in *Human Universe and Other Essays*, ed. Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 241–42.

7. Near the start of "Human Universe," Olson writes: "Der Weg stirbt, sd one. And was right, was he not? Then the question is: was is der Weg?" (in *Human Universe*, 155). The editors of the *Collected Prose*, Benjamin Friedlander and Donald Allen, untangle the cryptic reference to Africanist Leo Frobenius, who wrote of "the path that dies" in his 1928 edition of *Paideuma* (409).

8. Olson, "Human Universe," 156–59.

9. Not long before his own death in the late 1960s, Olson would remember Black Mountain as "the largest city I'll ever know, the swiftest." Charles Olson, "On Black Mountain College" (1968), in *Muthologos: The Collected Lectures and Interviews of Charles Olson*, ed. George F. Butterick (Bolinas, CA: Four Seasons Foundation, 1978), 68.

10. Olson, "Human Universe," 157.

BROADSIDE NO. 1

POEM by Charles Olson DESIGN by Nicola Cernovich

BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE GRAPHICS WORKSHOP
BLACK MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA 1952

THIS

mexico) could not
have guessed: wood, a
bowl of gray wood, of
an afternoon, already
shadowed (4
pm: very fast, high, sharp
rockets, a crazy trumpet
of a band, few
people, sloppy
cowboys picadors matadors bulls

but out there, on that dirt, in front, directly
before your eyes, more, yr existence:
death, the
possibility of same, the certitude
right there in front of yr
eyes, god damn yr
eyes
this bull and this man (these men) can
kill
one another

What one knows
put out, & quietly out, put out right exactly I mean OUT
in front of all eyes, including
the bull's, who runs out so
lightly, with such
declarations of
his presence

the man, so
careful, such
preparations (the bull only about to find out), the man
so clothed, such tools, and
running back to

so ludicrously the
barricade, the bull, too, smelling
the wood, where an opening is, how
to get out of

Whoever
conceived this action, this
thing, this
instant declaration of that which you know is all
that constitutes both what you are and what is going on at all time
as of you or anyone since and as long as whatever
it is that it is, is

this
bullfight:

the bull so much not
animal (as the word
is) his
experience so very clear, there, his
bewilderment, tries, angers (no
fear, mere increasing sense from confrontation that
he is
involved

the men (the man) so much more
animal, so
aware, their
courage (fear) so
very clear, so very much the reason why
we too are
involved, why
we, here,

((the man, down in that dirt, so much
a scampering, so much (advancing) a
sort of picked bantam))

those horns

that voice repeating "to-ro" "to-ro" "to-ro"

those words, wooing

that head, the plain danger of

you

have been

asked

"This," *Broadside* no. 1, Black Mountain College Graphics Workshop, 1952.
Poetry by Charles Olson and illustration by Nicholas Cernovich. 24 x 18 inches.

Fielding Dawson, *Charles Olson*, 1956. Ink and collage on cardboard mounted on burlap. 11 ⅞ x 12 ½ inches

"Merce of Egypt" (1952)
Charles Olson

1 I sing the tree is a heron
I praise long grass
I wear the lion skin
over the long skirt
to the ankle. The ankle
is a heron

I look straightly backward. Or I bend to the side straightly
to raise the sheaf
up to the stick of the leg
as the bittern's leg, raised
as slow as
his neck grows
as the wheat. The presentation,
the representation,
is flat

I am followed by women and a small boy in white carrying a duck,
all have flat feet and, foot before foot, the women with black wigs
And I intent
upon idlers,
and flowers

2 the sedge
as tall as I am, the rushes
as I am
as far as I am animal, antelope
with such's attendant carnivores

and rows of beaters
drive the game to the hunter, of into nets,
where it is thick-wooded or there are open spaces
with low shrubs

3 I speak downfall, the ball of my foot
on the neck of the earth, the hardsong
of the rise of all trees, the jay
who uses the air. I am the recovered sickle
with the grass-stains still on the flint of its teeth.
I am the six-rowed barley
they cut down.

I am tree. The boy of the back of my legs
is roots. I am water fowl
when motion is the season of my river, and the wild boar
casts me. But my time
is hawkweed,

4 I hold what the wind blows, and silt.
I hide in the swamps of the valley to escape civil war,
and marauding soldiers. In the new procession
I am first, and carry wine
made of dandelions. The new rites
are my bones

I built my first settlement
in groves

5 as they would flail crops
when the spring comes, and flood, the tassels
rise, as my head

CHARLES OLSON
Mayan Letters

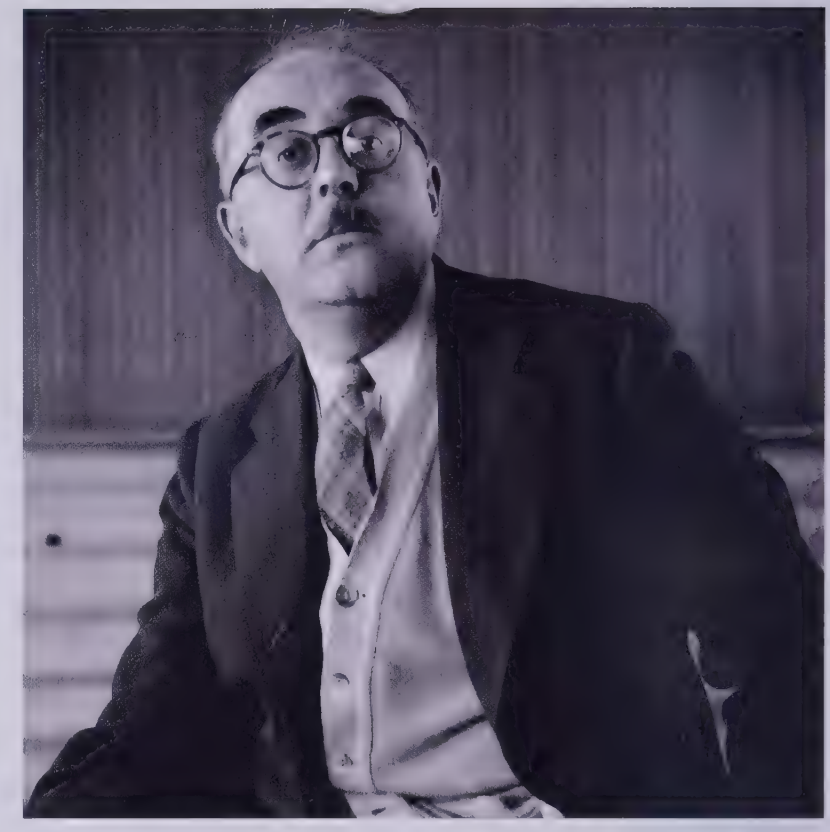
STEVE EVANS

Charles Olson, so different from Josef and Anni Albers in terms of temperament, pedagogical style, and administrative aptitude, shared their fascination with the Yucatán Peninsula and the deep history of the Mayan civilization that had taken root, flourished, and enigmatically disintegrated there centuries in advance of the Spanish conquest. After spending five months in Lerma, Mexico, he, like the Alberses, carried back to North Carolina a renewed engagement with a fundamental element of his art: in this case, the letter—in the sense of the epistolary unit of exchange and concrete letterform.[1]

As we know from multiple accounts, Olson's contagious enthusiasm for glyphs animated the summer session of 1951. Ben Shahn's stunning *A Glyph for Charles*—thick "lettristic" strokes projected onto a human torso as though they formed its musculature—dates from that session, as does Katherine Litz's dance *The Glyph*, performed to Lou Harrison's score of the same name. Tactile, mobile, propulsive, operating below and beyond the narrow band of conventional semantics, the glyphic mark functioned for Olson as an alternative to the abstraction of the Western phonetic alphabet, in which the body of language (signifier) and its soul (signified) were forever split. For him, the Mayan system of inscription did not impose an insuperable separation from reality, it captured and transmitted an enviable power of attentiveness on the part of its creators, "men [who] were able," in Olson's estimate, "to stay so interested in the expression and gesture of all creatures, including at least three planets in addition to the human face, eyes and hands, that they invented a system of written record, now called hieroglyphs, which, on its very face, is verse, the signs were so clearly and densely chosen that, cut in stone, they retain the power of the objects of which they are images."[2]

Olson's seventeen *Mayan Letters*, dated between February 18 and July 1, 1951, strive to attain a comparable state of total attentiveness. His mode of address is direct (though recipient Robert Creeley is referred to only as "lad" or variants of the second-person pronoun) and intensely emotive—for example, apparently too keyed up to respect lexical boundaries, he begins the March 17 letter with "christamiexcited."[3] The letters abruptly shift registers and modes: from lyrical anecdote—most memorably, the poignant opening scene with the wounded seabird—to jubilant reports from the snake-infested field; from inspired flights of anthropological speculation to sharply focused stabs at literary strategy.

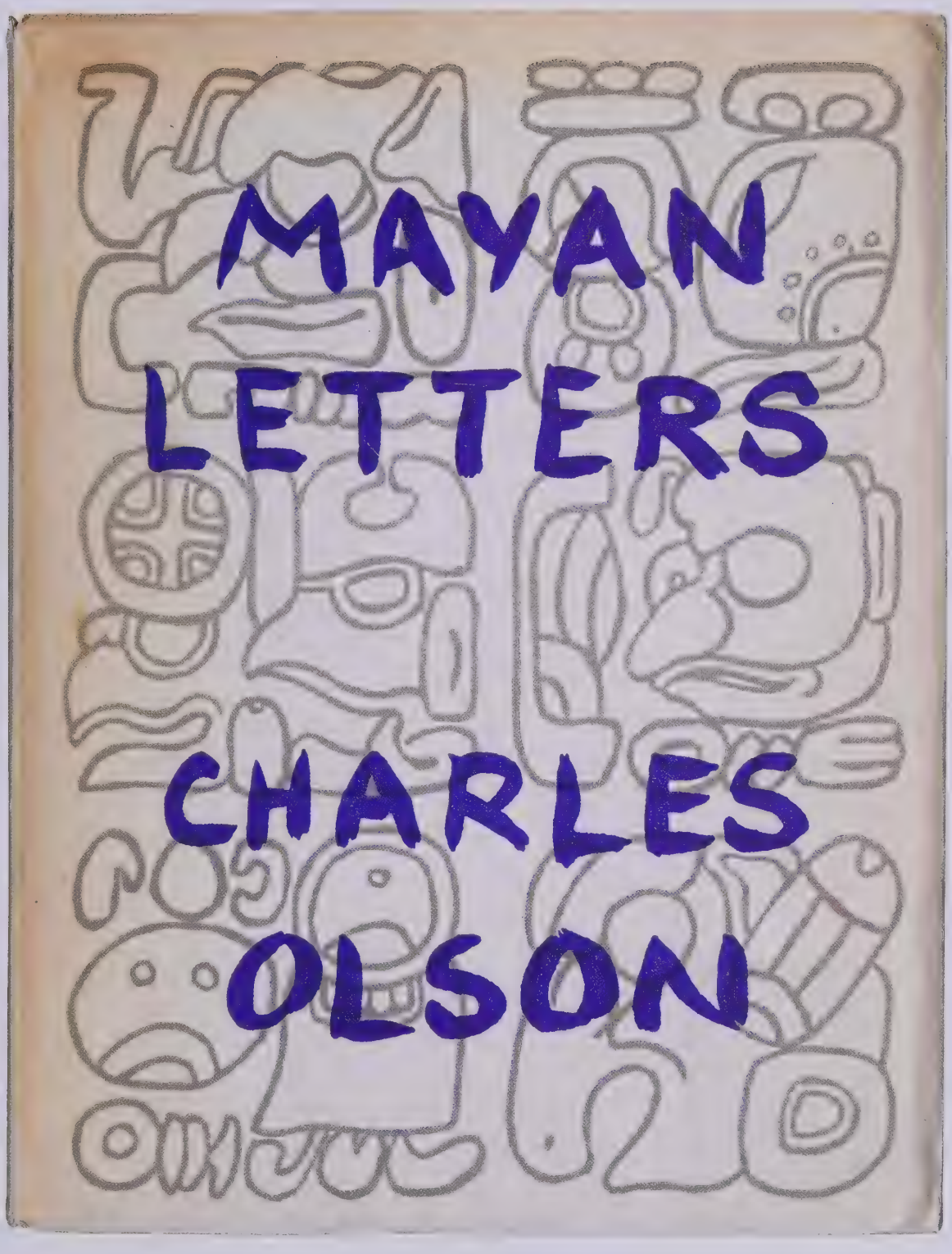
The group of letters is guided by a principle only articulated in the final sentence of the final letter: "The trouble is, it is very difficult, to be both a poet and, an historian."[4] The role of historian commits him to a program—associated by Olson with precedents in antiquity such as Pausanias and Herodotus—of "finding out for oneself,"[5] with all the hazards and happenstances that attend such a quest for firsthand experience of primary materials. The role of the poet carries an even more rigorous responsibility: to discover—along with all and any evidence of "man as object in field of force"[6] and "states of being & geography divers from the modern"[7]—a use of language equal to such discovery.



Charles Olson, n.d. Photo by Jonathan Williams. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection.

For Olson, the project of becoming a poet-historian—and of holding himself in a state of "negative capability"[8] as apparently contradictory forces contend around and within him—is as valuable and challenging as overcoming the mind-body split he traces back to Socrates. The Mayan hieroglyphs are evidence of a human capacity for inhabiting one's skin fully and gracefully. "Any dancer now living," he advises in the letter of April 1, would do well to learn from their example. Back at Black Mountain, Katherine Litz was waiting to do just that.

1. It is interesting to note that in France at roughly the same time Isidore Isou and other *lettristes* were experimenting with the letter as a unit of composition, sometimes in isolation, sometimes supplemented by other media (*metagraphie* and *hypergraphie*).
2. Charles Olson, "Mayan Letters" (1953), in *Selected Writings of Charles Olson*, ed. Robert Creeley (New York: New Directions, 1966), 159.
3. When the "f" key on Olson's typewriter breaks later in the composition of the same letter, it unleashes a string of expletives that culminates, ironically, in "fuck it."
4. Olson, "Mayan Letters," 130.
5. Ibid., 129.
6. Ibid., 112.
7. Ibid., 128
8. The Keatsian concept of "negative capability" is cited approvingly by Olson in several writings of this period, including "Projective Verse."



Cover of Charles Olson's *Mayan Letters*, Divers Press, Majorca, 1953.
Archives and Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center,
University of Connecticut Libraries.

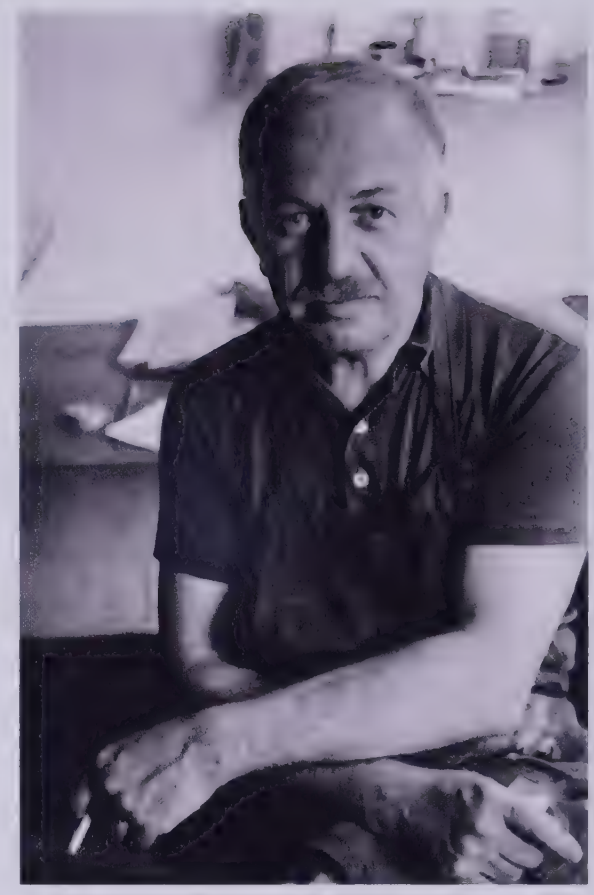
BEN SHAHN
Song

RUTH ERICKSON

In 1951, Ben Shahn—at the invitation of Charles Olson, whom Shahn had befriended while working in the Office of War Information in the 1940s—came to Black Mountain College to teach painting and to lecture on art.[1] He arrived in late July and stayed for just four weeks, yet during this time, Shahn fully participated in college life, undertaking collaborations with dancers, giving a riveting lecture titled "Aspects of Realism," and initiating an important shift in his painting practice. Shahn's artistic style, rooted as it was in Social Realism, must have stood out, considering the work of Robert Motherwell, the other visual arts teacher that summer, as well as the growing predominance of Abstract Expressionism in New York by 1951.[2] *Song* (1950), however, illustrates the many ways that Shahn actively staged a dynamic dialogue between figuration and abstraction to achieve his conception of realism, which he defined in his lecture at the college as "an earnest search for truth within the framework of one's own values."[3]

Song portrays two singers in three-quarter profile with expressions that convey the focus and determination of their performance. Shahn wrote in 1953, "My own observation of singers, my own experience with them, has given me an entirely different emotional attitude toward them. *Song*, I observe, does not issue from an untroubled face; quite the contrary, the beautiful sounds, the subtleties and delicacies; the minors, the accidentals, all require an intense concentration on the part of the singer. That concentration produces a facial expression nearing agony."[4] In *Song*, the countenance of the guitar player and the crossed-arm pose of the singer exemplify Shahn's close study of performance. Shahn draws attention to the guitar player's face by tightly grouping his furrowed brow, straining eyes, nose, and mouth into the triangular black frame of the music stand, and he emphasizes the singer's timid stance through the overlay of red arms on her green dress. Furthermore, Shahn renders the figures, music stand, and piano as flat planes overlaying and interacting with one another while hovering in an indeterminate space. Such play with distortion, color, and flatness fuses Shahn's representational subject matter with the pictorial tools of abstraction.[5] As Shahn's wife, Bernarda Bryson Shahn, observed in her book on the artist: "Shahn's art stood somewhere between the abstract and what is called figurative, borrowing from the one its material riches of color, shape, and texture, its explorations in form, its preference for inner organization as against outer verisimilitude, from the other its focus upon man as the center of value and as the most interesting object on earth."[6] In *Song*, Shahn harnesses the energy of abstraction to capture the fleeting bodily contortions of performance.

This approach to painting manifests Shahn's understanding of realism and his commitment to humanism. In his lecture "Aspects of Realism," delivered in the dining hall at Black Mountain soon after his arrival, Shahn delineates the contingency of realism, imagining a series of hypothetical responses to a painting from the viewpoints of a psychologist, a physicist, an art critic, and so forth, who variously appeal to the subconscious, atomic structure, and contemporary trends to evaluate the painting's representation of reality. This rhetorical exercise was not to nullify any particular viewpoint or advocate total relativity but rather to illustrate the



Hazel Larsen Archer, *Ben Shahn*, 1951. Gelatin silver print, 10 ¼ x 6 ½ inches. Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

1. This is the same year that the influential biography of Ben Shahn, *Portrait of the Artist as an American, Ben Shahn: A Biography with Pictures*, was published, bringing the artist widespread attention and ultimately resulting in his invitation to represent the United States in the Venice Biennale in 1954.
2. Willem de Kooning taught in 1948, and in 1952 key artists associated with the New York School of Abstract Expressionism taught at the college, including Jack Tworkov and Franz Kline.
3. Ben Shahn, "Aspects of Realism," lecture delivered at Black Mountain College, July 29, 1951. Transcript in the Black Mountain College Project Papers, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
4. Ben Shahn, "How an Artist Looks at Aesthetics" (1953), excerpted in Frances Pohl, *Ben Shahn* (San Francisco: Pomegranate Communications, 1993), 104.
5. For more on the relationship between Shahn and Abstract Expressionism, see Stephen Polcari, "Shahn and Postwar American Art," in *Common Man, Mythic Vision: The Paintings of Ben Shahn* (New York: Jewish Museum and Princeton University Press, 1999), 68–109.
6. Bernarda Bryson Shahn, *Ben Shahn* (New York: Abrams, 1972), 15.

Ben Shahn, *Song*, 1950. Tempera on canvas mounted on wood, 30 7/8 x 52 inches.

many "aspects" of realism. In contemporaneous debates about the humanistic value of abstract versus Social Realist art, Shahn is most often placed on the side of Social Realism, and yet his stance is more nuanced.[7] According to Shahn, artists develop their individual perspectives of reality by observing the people, objects, and activities of daily life and translating these into art. "To me the human being is ultimate value; the arts, its prime manifestation," stated Shahn in his lecture. His position is quite close to that of Albers; for both men, art—its humanism and its ethics—is based on the act of observation.[8]

During his stay at the college, Shahn began to use "palimpsest"—the building up of layers so that prior marks remain visible—a technique suggestive of time and of movement.[9] Perhaps it was his involvement with dance performance at Black Mountain, including his collaboration with the dancer and student Nicholas Cernovich, that led Shahn to this key technical and stylistic shift.[10] As already evident in *Song* from the prior year, Shahn employed modes of abstraction to abet his portrayal of real subjects. By integrating figuration and abstraction, Shahn endeavored, in his words, to retain "that which is individual, that which is particular, and that which is human."[11]

7. Shahn's proposals should be contextualized within a raging debate that took place during the early 1950s about modern art and humanism, specifically whether abstract art—often accused of hermeticism—can convey humanistic values. See "A Statement on Modern Art," copublished by the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in March 1950. For more on Shahn and humanism, see Frances Pohl, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artists in a Cold War Climate, 1947–1954* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 103–10.

8. See Helen Molesworth, "Imaginary Landscape," in this volume, esp. 47.

9. Frances Pohl, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artists in a Cold War Climate, 1947–1954*, 115–17. See also Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 221.

10. As discussed further in my entry "Between Media: The Glyph Exchange," in this volume, 328–30. Shahn participated in the multimedia "Glyph Exchange" with the poet Charles Olson, the dancer Katherine Litz, and the composer Lou Harrison, and he designed a set and motif for the student, dancer, and filmmaker Nicholas Cernovich's dance performance.

11. Ben Shahn, "Aspects of Realism," lecture delivered at Black Mountain College, July 29, 1951.

Ben Shahn. *Study for Nicolas C.*, 1951. Ink on paper, 12 ½ x 9 ½ inches. Location unknown.

BETWEEN MEDIA: THE GLYPH EXCHANGE

RUTH ERICKSON

Katherine Litz performing *The Glyph* at Black Mountain College, 1951. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Photo by Teri Helen Dick.

After spending four months in the Yucatán in the summer of 1951, Charles Olson returned to Black Mountain College inspired by his encounters with Mayan glyphs. Vegetal, animal, and geometric forms sumptuously painted on walls and carved into stone, glyphs make up the elaborate writing script of the Mayan civilization, and each one represents a word, a syllable, or both.[1] It was the glyph's fluency as both text and image that attracted Olson. "What I want to get to, with you," Olson wrote to the poet Robert Creeley from the Yucatán, "is, at the nature of this *language*, of which the glyphs are the most beautiful expression."[2] The glyph became an obsession for Olson; it embodied not only the history and future of writing but also a model for Black Mountain.[3]

Eager to deploy the glyph as a force of artistic production, Olson initiated what dance teacher Katherine Litz described as "an exchange of 'glyph-gifts' among the faculty."[4] The summer session of 1951 included a remarkable group of teachers and students, including the painters Ben Shahn and Robert Motherwell; composer Lou Harrison, who had been recommended by John Cage; David Tudor, who accompanied Litz as her pianist; and students such as Cy Twombly, Robert Rauschenberg, and Susan Weil, among others.

The first exchange took place between Olson and Shahn, who had first met in the early 1940s working in the Office of War Information, where they produced a bilingual pamphlet to garner support for the war among Spanish speakers, and who also worked together to mobilize ethnic minorities to vote for President Roosevelt's reelection in 1944.[5] Of the many poems Olson worked on in July 1951, it is unclear exactly which poem Olson gave to Shahn.[6] However, taking into account their prior collaborations and Shahn's reciprocal drawing, it is most likely a poem that conjures "race"—glyph-like—as a word, image, and event.[7]

GLYPH
(For Alvin,
& the Shahns)

Like a race, the Negro boy said
And I wasn't sure I heard, what
Race, he said it clear
gathering
into his attention the auction
inside, the room
too lit, the seats
theatre soft, his foot
the instant it crossed the threshold
(as his voice) drawing
the whites' eyes off
the silver set New Yorkers
passed along the rows for weight, feel
the weight, leading
Southern summer idling evening folk
to bid up, dollar by dollar, I

beside him in the door.

Olson wrote the poem after encountering an auction in the town of Black Mountain, while in the company of a boy named Alvin, the nephew of the college's African-American cook, Jack Lipsey.[8] "His poem," the historian Daniel Belgrad writes, "attempts to reconstruct the complex of meanings surrounding the word, by providing an ideogrammic image that locates 'race' in the context of a specific utterance and telescopes outward."[9] Beginning with a reference to the spoken word ("Like a race, the Negro boy said"), Olson builds a rich constellation of images ("the room / too lit," "the whites' eyes") and sensations ("the seats / theatre soft," "feel / the weight") that endow his meditation on the abstract word *race* with a lived, corporeal character. It is the quality of race as an abstraction derived from and applied to a physical body that Shahn captures in his drawing.

Though now lost, Shahn's drawing, inscribed with "A Glyph for Charles," depicts a headless human torso as a rigid black armature filled in with a mosaic of color and framed by two arms hanging on either side.[10] The drawing was based on a design that Shahn drew directly onto the body of the student Nicholas Cernovich for a dance performance at the college.[11] As visible in Shahn's preparatory sketches, he derives the central, glyph-like form from the anatomy of the human body and yet, in the process, thoroughly abstracts the body into an ideogram.[12] As much as Shahn's glyph oscillates between figuration and abstraction, especially when animated by Cernovich's dancing body, it also draws attention to the chest, which, as the place of breath, is, for Olson, poetry's point of departure.[13] In this first exchange, Olson's poem and Shahn's drawing, gifts between old friends, *become* glyphs, communicating through a complex of text and image, abstraction and figuration.

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1. For a summary of the Mayan writing script and its decipherment, see Michael Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).
2. Charles Olson, *Mayan Letters*, ed. Robert Creeley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), 58.
3. Olson was not the first teacher at Black Mountain College to show interest in ancient pictorial writing systems when he began teaching at the college in the fall of 1948. The Alberses, especially Anni, had already become fascinated by ideograms and hieroglyphs during their numerous trips to Mexico and Latin America beginning in the late 1930s, and they had integrated these interests into their artistic production and teaching, inspiring students Ruth Asawa and Ray Johnson to do the same. On the Alberses' travel in Latin America, see *Anni and Josef Albers: Latin American Journeys*, ed. Brenda Danilowitz and Heinz Liesbrock (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2007). On Ray Johnson's integration of hieroglyphs and code systems, see Kate Erin Dempsey, "Ray Johnson in Correspondence with Marcel Duchamp and Beyond," PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2013.
4. Katherine Litz, "Statement on the Summer Dance Program at BMC," Black Mountain College Research Project, State Archives of North Carolina, Western Regional Archives, Asheville, NC. For more on the "glyph exchange," see Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 221; Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 25–32; *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, ed. Vincent Katz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 186–88; Eva Díaz, "Experiment, Expression, and the Paradox of Black Mountain College," in *Starting at Zero: Black Mountain College, 1933–1957* (Bristol: Arnolfini Gallery, 2005), 55–58; and Katherine Markoski, "Elective Affinities: Artistic Practice at Black Mountain College, 1948–1953," PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2013, 158–71.
5. The pamphlet was titled *Spanish-Speaking Americans in the War* (1943). See Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity*, 22–24.
6. Olson also completed two dance plays that summer, *Apollonius of Tyanna* and *The Born Dancer*, demonstrating his interest in integrating music, dance, and poetry.
7. Vincent Katz suggests it might have been the undated manuscript titled "Glyph," which can today be found in the Charles Olson Papers, Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT. He also considers whether it was the poem "A Round & a Canon," dated July 1951, which was dedicated to Katy Litz and Lou Harrison. *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*, 186–87.
8. On July 22, 1951, Olson wrote to Creeley that Shahn had painted *A Glyph for Charles* in return for a poem he wrote titled "Glyphs." Olson wrote again five days later, describing "A GLYPH show, Shahn, Litz, & Harrison, taking up, somehow, and using, the little verse, on the Negro boy, and the auction show." Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, *The Complete Correspondence*, vol. 6 (New York: Black Sparrow Press, 1983), 177, 211.
9. Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity*, 91.
10. In the documentary film *Denise Levertov and Charles Olson* (1966), directed by Richard Moore, the drawing hangs behind Olson in his home in Gloucester, Massachusetts.
11. Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, 221. The designs were further realized in two large-scale drawings, *Down Fall* and *Nicolas C* (both 1951).
12. Bernarda Bryson Shahn, *Ben Shahn* (New York: Abrams, 1972), 186.
13. Markoski astutely discusses Shahn's focus on the torso, suggesting that it tends to "universalize the body represented" in an appeal to a human race and that it connects with Olson's emphasis on the breath as the projective poem's point of origin. Markoski, "Elective Affinities," 163–64.

Hazel Larsen Archer, *Katherine Litz in Dining Hall*, c. 1952–53. Gelatin silver print, 7 x 6 inches.

The second part of the glyph exchange consisted of a composition by Harrison and a dance by Litz.[14] Harrison wrote *The Glyph* for a prepared piano, two bells, claves, a pitchfork, and "perhaps" a gong. The composition's six movements range from a challenging piano part in standard notation to a textual instruction for "improvisation on gong or piano (same notes): follow dance." The variation of percussive instruments and periods of improvisation assured the score's aural mutability each time it was played, as did the phrase peppered throughout the score to "follow dance."

For her nine-minute solo dance *The Glyph*, Litz retained the six-part structure, emerging and disappearing six times from behind a four-by-eight-foot flat painted with an enlarged version of Shahn's drawing.[15] Each time, she invented a kind of character through the manipulation of her body and a jersey tube costume. Moving with mime-like precision and humor, she first bounced onto the stage, flipping the top of the dress up and down, and then reappeared galloping, pivoting, shuffling, and crawling, showcasing an index of how bodies move. As rapidly as a character seemed to appear, it was transformed through movement—a mermaid turned into a tree, then a stone sculpture, then an animal.[16] In a review of the choreographer's most famous dance, Olson marveled at Litz's capacity to reinvent her body: "And suddenly all the magnificent freedoms, which the years she has given to her study of the essentials of the human body—its parts, their relevances to one another, and that which is more than the sum of the parts and their relevances—are before one's eyes to see."[17]

Litz's dance, like Harrison's score, served as a frame for a series of evocative and subtle variations that gesture to the glyph's protean and layered character. Furthermore, as captured in a video of *The Glyph* performed by Litz during the 1977 New York Dance Festival, music and dance operated as inter- and independent entities with passages of perfectly rhymed sounds and motion, as well as bells that ring out of sync and piano notes that linger beyond Litz's disappearance.[18] According to Litz, "The common idea of a Glyph expressed by the different art forms was simply a compound image contained in a single work."[19] In the second exchange, music and dance become, as text and image had in the first, interlocking yet independent parts of a compound form.

Seemingly inspired by the recent glyph exchange, Olson appealed to his friend W. H. Ferry for funds to support the college:

> What happens *between* things—what happens between *men*—what happens between guest faculty, students, regular faculty—and what happens *among* each as a result of each: for I do not think one can overstate—at this point of time, America, 1951—the importance of workers in different fields of the arts and of knowledge working so closely together some of the time of the year that they find out, from each other, the ideas, forms, energies, and the whole series of kinetics and emotions now opening up, out of the quantitative world.[20]

The glyph had animated these *spaces between*, making it a compelling model of creation and education at Black Mountain.

14. In the summer of 1951, Harrison and Litz also collaborated on *Chorales for Spring*. Harrison's composition, *Adjustable Chorale*, was flexible enough for the development of the choreography. See Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Composing a World* (New York: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 94.

15. Charles Oscar, Litz's then husband, painted the flat and is acknowledged at the top of Harrison's composition. Litz performed the *Glyph* dance in New York on December 23, 1951. For an excellent description of the dance, see Naomi M. Jackson, *Converging Movements: Modern Dance and Jewish Culture at the 92nd St. Y* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), 156–60.

16. See the collected reminiscences in "Katherine Litz (1912–1978): An Appreciation," *Dance Observer*, no. 3 (March 1979): 60–63.

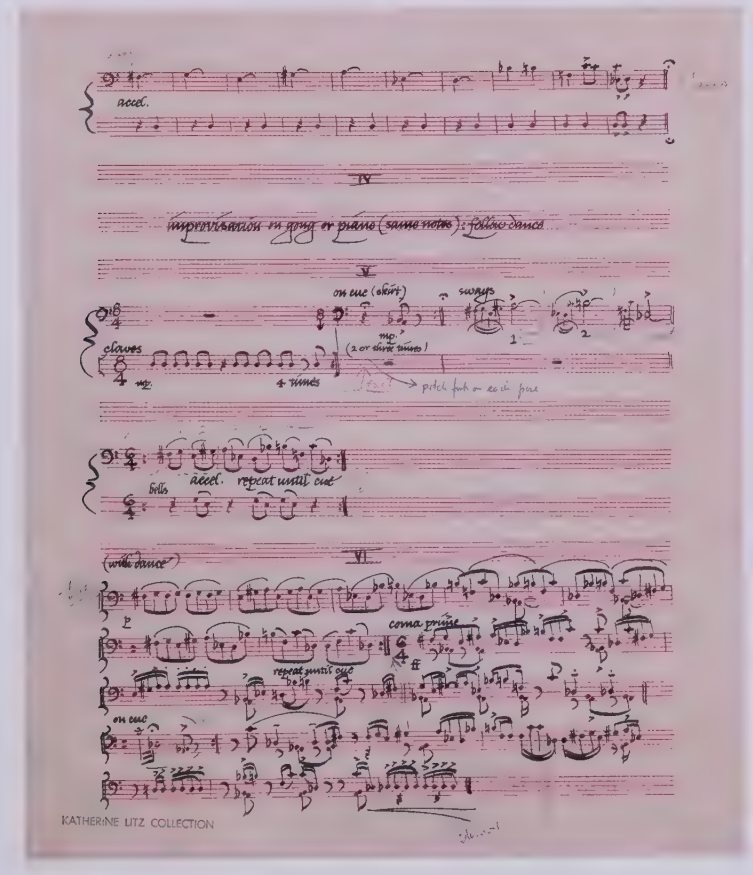
17. Charles Olson, "Katherine Litz Dance Concert: A Review," *Olson: The Journal of the Charles Olson Archives* 8 (Fall 1977): 16

18. *I'm OK, You're*** [and] The Glyph*, videotape by Johannes Holub of Litz's performance of *The Glyph* during the 1977 New York Dance Festival, Delacorte Theater, Central Park, September 4, 1977, New York Public Library of Performing Arts, New York.

19. Katherine Litz, "Statement on the Summer Dance Program at BMC," Black Mountain College Research Project, "Summer Session 1952," Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.

20. Charles Olson, letter to W. H. Ferry, August 7, 1951, in *The Journal of the Charles Olson Archives*, no. 2 (Fall 1974): 8–15, quoted in John Wrighton, *Ethics and Politics in Modern American Poetry* (London: Routledge, 2010), 24. Olson continued to pursue the study of glyphs. In the fall of 1951, he offered a course titled Hieroglyphic Writing and Ovid's Metamorphoses, and he spent the fall of 1952 in the Yucatán, after receiving a grant to study Mayan glyphs from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

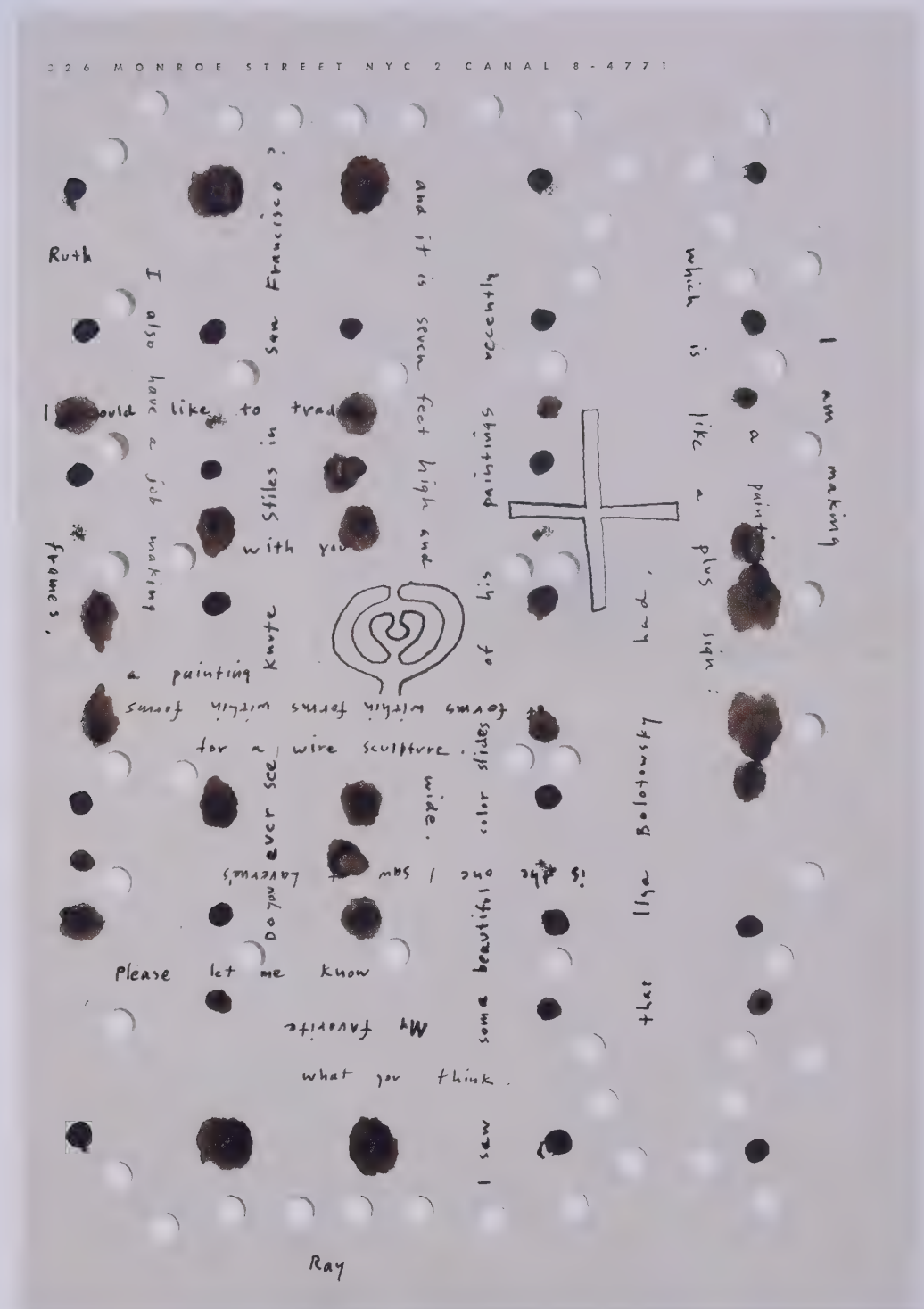
The Glyph
Charles Ives, Ben Shahn, Charles Ives, Katherine Litz, Lou Harrison
the music, for prepared piano, 2 bells, claves, pitch fork, & perhaps, gong.
piano preparation consists of sometimes pressing firmly against
all the low strings, & at a "nodal angle", a heavy piece of wood,
as, perhaps 2"x2", & on the sharp edge
(♩= 66)
Allegro
I
(piano always 8)
KATHERINE LITZ COLLECTION



Lou Harrison, *The Glyph*, 1951. Ink on staff paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches each.

Lorna Blaine Halper, rebus letter to her parents, 1947. Ink on paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches. Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina.

Ray Johnson, *Untitled (Moticos with Legs and Letters)*, c. 1953–54. Graphite, gouache, and printed-paper collage, mounted on cardboard, 11 x 6 ½ inches.


326 MONROE STREET NYC 2 CANAL 8-4771
Ruth
I also have a job making figures,
I should like to trade with you
San Francisco?
and it is seven feet high and
I am making
a painting
which is like a plus sign:
of his paintings recently
that Ilya Bolotowsky had,
I saw some beautiful color slides
My favorite
what you think.
Please let me know
Do you ever see Lavernis
I saw one
for a wire sculpture.
forms within forms within forms
a painting Kante
Stiles in
Ray

Ray Johnson, *Letter to Ruth (326 Monroe St. NYC 2 Canal 8–4771)*, c. 1952. Ink on stationery, 10 ½ x 7 ¼ inches.

Nicholas Cernovich and Katherine Litz, stills from *Thoughts out of Season*, c. 1952.
16mm film (color), approx. 3:00 min.

CY TWOMBLY
MIN-OE

JENNIFER GROSS

Cy Twombly met Robert Rauschenberg at the Art Students League in New York in the autumn of 1950. They became fast friends and colleagues, and Twombly followed Rauschenberg to Black Mountain College the following summer. The faculty that year included poet Charles Olson, photographer Hazel Larsen Archer, dancer Katherine Litz, and painters Robert Motherwell and Ben Shahn. At Black Mountain, Twombly was immersed in a wholly creative environment, an experience he found affirming and enjoyable.[1] Like many of the college's students, it was there that he began to see himself as an artist instead of a student of art.

Twombly painted a number of black-and-white landscape-inspired abstractions that summer.[2] While the landscapes are reminiscent of the edge-to-edge canvases of Motherwell and Franz Kline (who had his first one-person exhibition at Egan Gallery in New York the previous year), the handful of paintings, including *MIN-OE* (1951), investigated figure-to-ground relations as a means to create an abstraction. In a working method similar to that of Kline, Twombly executed an exhaustive number of collages and drawn studies in notebooks that dispute the widespread conception that his early paintings were spontaneously generated expressionistic works. The title of the painting invokes ancient cultures, and scholars have astutely connected this work to the zoomorphic doublings of totemic figures found in western Iranian metalwork that was produced in the first millennium BCE, particularly Luristān bronzes. His emulation of the rough symmetry of these highly stylized animal and human forms manifests Twombly's avowed interest in tribal art and archaic male and female symbolism, which were popular concerns within the Black Mountain community at this time.[3]

His quick and coarse application of bitumen (an asphalt-like compound) and house paint produced a painting that is aggressively tactile, its arid, scarred surface a painterly specimen of primal matter. Twombly described his handling of the medium as invoking "a deeply aesthetic sense of eroded or ancient surfaces of time."[4] His manipulation of these materials is markedly unlike what would become his signature painting style, which resulted in gestural forms across the surface of a picture plane. In *MIN-OE*, the brushwork, an accumulation of nondescriptive marks, lies on the surface of the canvas, building up dense structures that are indecipherable as images. These forms and negative spaces fill the pictorial field of the canvas in a composition that remains haunting, its mystique both confrontational and alluring.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (from Portfolio II)*, 1952. Gelatin silver print, 5 ⅝ x 3 ¼ inches.

1. See Nicholas Serota, "History Behind the Thought," in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, ed. Nicholas Serota (London: Tate, 2008), 44
2. He later painted over most of these works
3. See Richard Leeman, *Cy Twombly: A Monograph* (Paris: Flammarion, 2005), 14.
4. Cy Twombly, quoted in Nicholas Cullinan, "American-Type Painting?" in *Cy Twombly: Cycles and Seasons*, 56.

Cy Twombly, *MIN-OE*, 1951. Bitumen and oil-based house paint on canvas, 34 x 39 5/8 inches.

ROBERT DUNCAN

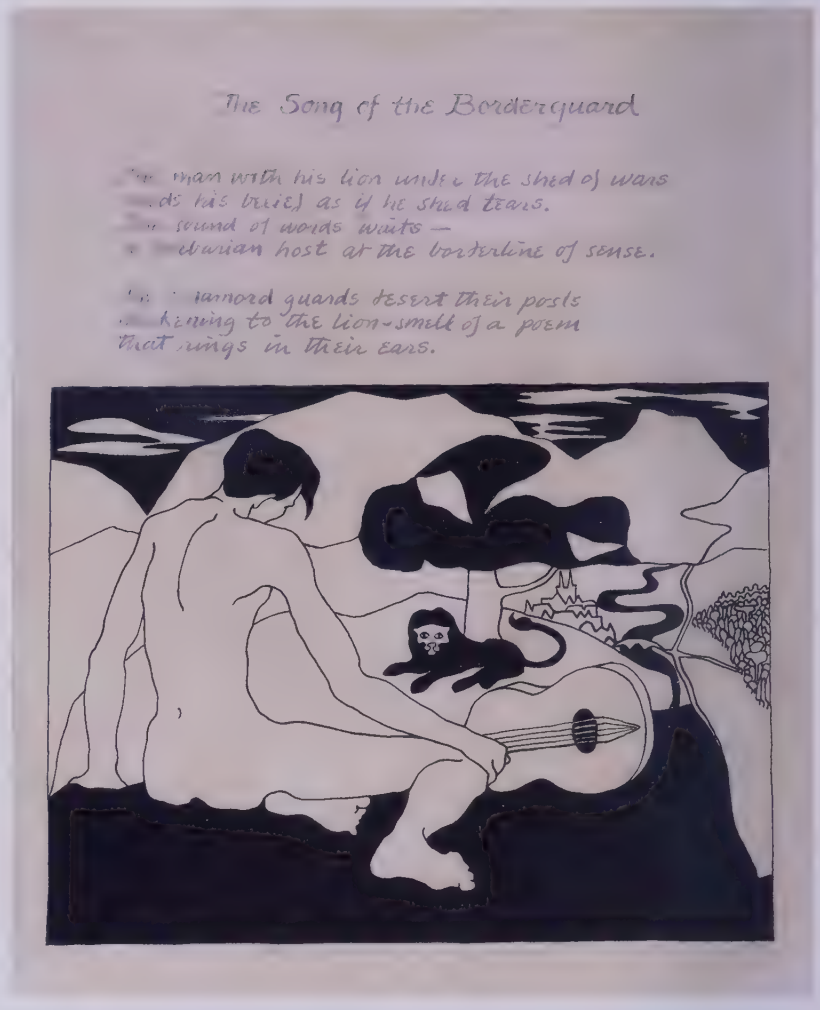
The Song of the Borderguard

STEVE EVANS

What happens when vigilance abates? When one drops one's guard? When surrender means something other than defeat? These are the questions that resound throughout Robert Duncan's early poem "The Song of the Borderguard," an echo chamber in which the boundaries between persons and nations, waking and sleeping, meaning and nonsense, dissolve. Written in 1950, when Duncan was falling in love with Jess Collins, a nuclear physicist who had recently renounced the military-intellectual complex to make a new start in the San Francisco art scene, the poem was printed as a broadside by Nicholas Cernovich in the spring of 1952, with linocut cover images attributed to Cy Twombly (but probably realized in collaboration with Robert Rauschenberg).[1]

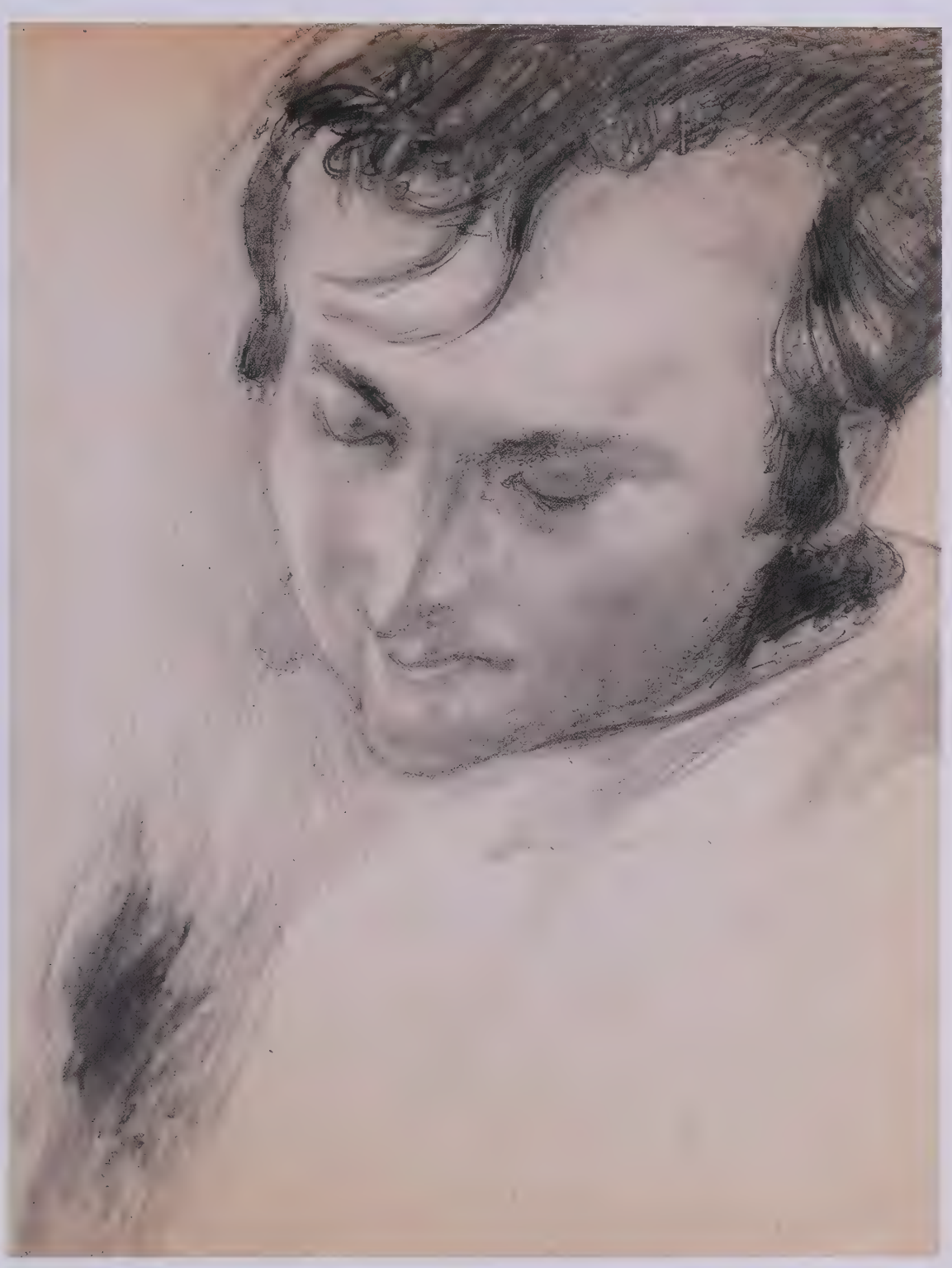
The risk and tension that accompanied queer coupledom in Cold War America—which Duncan and Collins experienced on the cusp of what would be an enduring union and which Twombly and Rauschenberg encountered in the intense months following the latter's separation from Susan Weil—finds material expression in the coral-wrapped poem printed in red ink on laid paper, which begins: "The man with his lion under the shed of wars / sheds his belief as if he shed tears." The extraordinary economy of the poem is evident in these opening lines. The word *shed*, used first as a noun ("shed of wars"), repeats twice as a verb ("shed his belief," "shed tears"). The difficulty posed to the visual imagination by the phrase "shed of wars" derives from the poet's avoidance of a cliché—"shadow of war"—and is redeemed when the reader notices that *bloodshed*, a prime metonym for "war," has been subtly evoked by means of that same swerve. A similar sleight of word converts the *line* implicit in the poem's title—the borderline without which no border guard is required—into its paronomastic near twin, *lion*.[2] "The man with his lion," doubling the poet and his line, shelter—or is it tremble?—in the shadow of an overarching condition of war, alert to the "sound of words" that await, "a barbarian host at the borderline of sense."

Though the poem is careful to exclude topical references, favoring a degree of abstraction that allows the mythic (man and lion), erotic (lover and beloved), and aesthetic (poet and poem) to intermingle seamlessly, the "shadow" of the Korean War does darken and particularize the allegory.[3] The contested border between the two Koreas symbolizes the conflict between the communist and capitalist powers centered in Moscow and Washington and foreshadows other such attempts at geopolitical demarcation and containment, including the wall constructed in Berlin and the war conducted in Vietnam in the following decade.[4] But the same imperial gesture that imposes a border and a system for guarding it opens the possibility of desertion and defection. Duncan's "enamored guards desert their posts," seduced by the synesthetic experience of a poem that is at once pungent ("the lion-smell") and "rings in their ears." In his "wide-awake poem" of queer anti-imperial desire, another form of allegiance is emphatically affirmed: "Dear, dear, dear, dear, I sang / believe, believe, believe, believe."


The Song of the Borderguard
enamored guards desert their posts
hearing to the lion-smell of a poem
that rings in their ears.

Robert Duncan and Jess, *The Song of the Borderguard*, c. 1955. Ink on paper, 14 x 12 inches.

1. The poem was printed two years after Robert Duncan began corresponding with Charles Olson, and three years before he first arrived on the Black Mountain College campus.
2. In the history of painting, the "man with his lion" often takes the form of Jerome, patron saint of translation—the act of bringing meaning across linguistic borders.
3. See Robert Duncan's "Essay at War," begun soon after "Song of the Borderguard" was completed. Both would later be included in *A Book of Resemblances*, with drawings by Jess that "illustrate" Duncan's poems more directly than Twombly's linocut. Robert Duncan, *A Book of Resemblances: Poems 1950–1953* (New Haven, NH: H. Wenning, 1966).
4. Duncan's major books of the 1960s all are marked by his intense poetic, ethical, and political engagement with the war in Vietnam



Gerald Van de Wiele, *Portrait of Robert Duncan*, 1956. Graphite on paper, 22 ½ x 17 ½ inches.

‹above and opposite Cy Twombly, *The Song of the Border-Guard* (with printed broadsheet of poem by Robert Duncan), 1952. Linocut on paper; accompanied by poem by Robert Duncan on separate sheet, 20 x 13 ⅛ inches; and typewritten manuscript

THE SONG OF THE BORDER-GUARD

The man with his lion under the shed of wars
sheds his belief as if he shed tears.
The sound of words waits–
a barbarian host at the border-line of sense.

The enamourd guards desert their posts
harkening to the lion-smell of a poem
that rings in their ears.

—Dreams, a certain guard said,
were never designd so
to re-arrange an empire.

Along about six o'clock I take out my guitar
and sing to a lion
who sleeps like a line of poetry
in the shed of wars.

The man shedding his belief
knows that the lion is not asleep,
does not dream, is never asleep,
is a wide-awake poem
waiting like a lover for the disrobing of the guard;
the beautiful boundaries of the empire
naked, rapt round in the smell of a lion.

(The barbarians have passd over the significant phrase)

—When I was asleep,
a certain guard says,
a man shed his clothes as if he shed tears
and appeard as a lonely lion
waiting for a song under the shed-roof of wars.

I sang the song that he waited to hear,
I, the Prize-Winner, the Poet-Acclaimd.

Dear, dear, dear, dear, I sang,
believe, believe, believe, believe.
The shed of wars is splendid as the sky,
houses our waiting like a pure song
housing in its words the lion-smell
of the beloved disrobed.

I sang: believe, believe, believe.

I the guard because of my guitar
believe. I am the certain guard,
certain of the Beloved, certain of the Lion,
certain of the Empire. I with my guitar.
Dear, dear, dear, dear, I sing.
I, the Prize-Winner, the Poet on Guard.

The border-lines of sense in the morning light
are naked as a line of poetry in a war.

poem by ROBERT DUNCAN
design by CY TWOMBLY

Nicola Cernovich

Nicola Cernovich, Publisher Black Mountain Graphics Workshop Black Mountain College Black Mountain, North Carolina

Jess, *Section through Hairy Skin*, c. 1956. Collage on paper, 28 x 29 inches.

"Upon Taking Hold" (c. 1956)
Robert Duncan
Dedicated to Charles Olson

the world as we reach stretches,
    a hand in sight.
Thumb, Mountain, Tidelands of Lines,
    the heart and head lines,
the palmist said—stars,
    shatterings from Moon
                to
        slumbering Venus.

Mt Tamalpais.

    Cézanne restored the destroyd mountain.
And the hand in the painting
    comes up from its illusions
—a man shaped to the world's fate
    stretches upon his face

to wear the given mask.
Shaking himself from his wars,
    a ready dog.
It is to grasp or to measure
    a hand's breadth,
    this hand—mine
    as I write—
dares its contradictions,
    comes to rest,
tenses, shakes, seizes or is seized by the mind:

    mind, hand, eye,
moves over the keys. It is the exercise.
The poetry—now—a gesture,
a lifting of sentence as the wind lifts,

palm outward in address,
    fingers
            exactly
    curld

    —it is a fact—

the words not to be alterd.

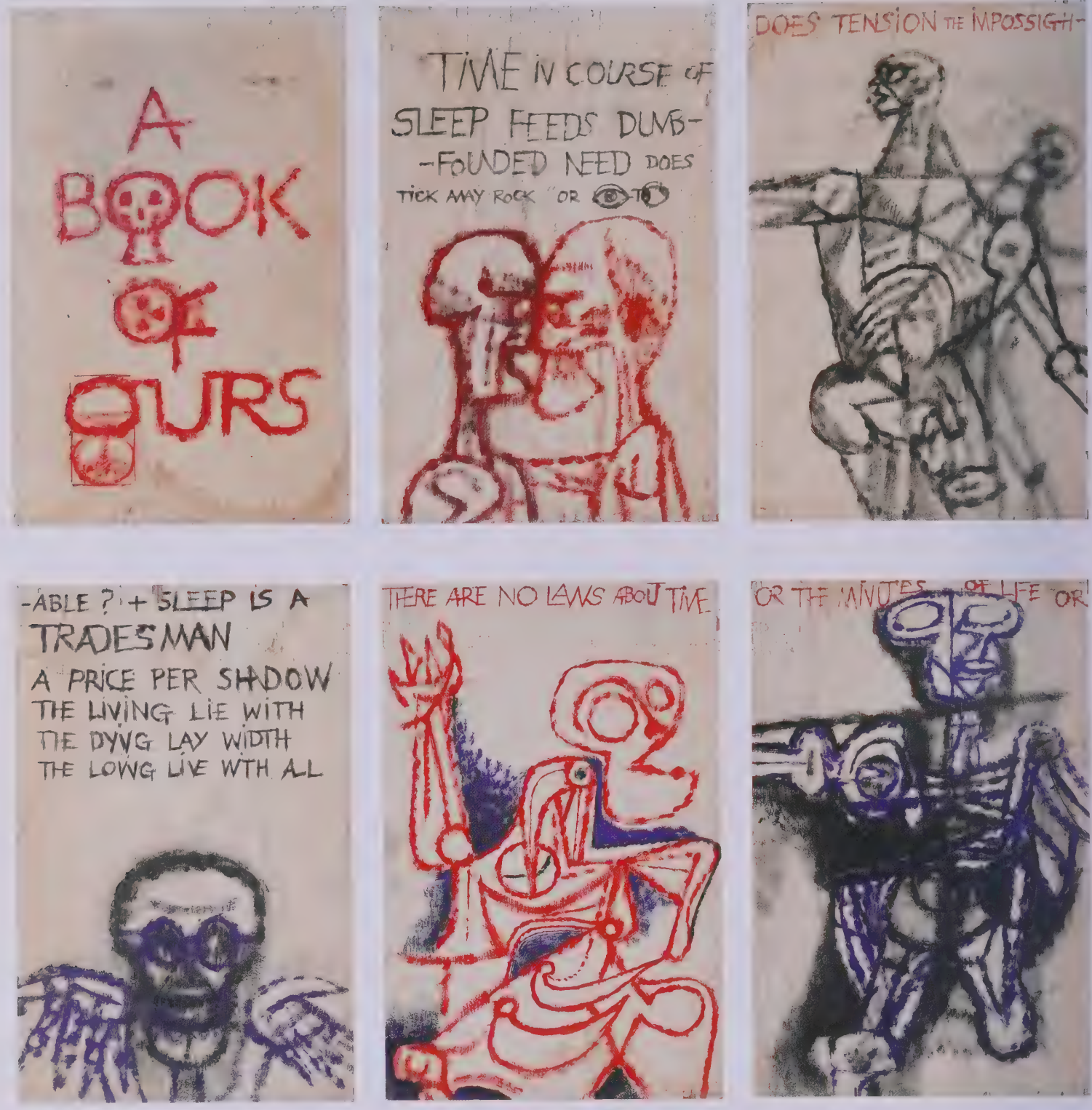
Is there another altar than the fact we make,
the form, fate, future dared
    desired in the act?

Words can drop as my hand drops (hawk
    on wing
        waits
    weight and
                drops
to conquer inarticulate love
    leaving articulate

    the actual mountain.

This is the bunch of ranunculus,
    rose, butter, orange crowfoot
    profuse bouquet in its white china pitcher;
this is the hookd rug workd in rich color
    the red, blue, ochre,
    violet, emerald, azure,
    the black, pink, rose,
    oyster white, the orange . . .
this is the orange measurement of the lines
    as I design them.

The joys of the household are fates that command us.



Stan VanDerBeek, *A Book of Ours*, 1955–57. Paint on wood, 12 panels, 11 x 7 ¼ inches each.

WHO'S NEXT THE BARTERED
BARBER SAYS ——

THE BATTERED BAKERS =

THE PATIENT DR.'s STALL

THE SENATURD THE
BISHOPE TOO

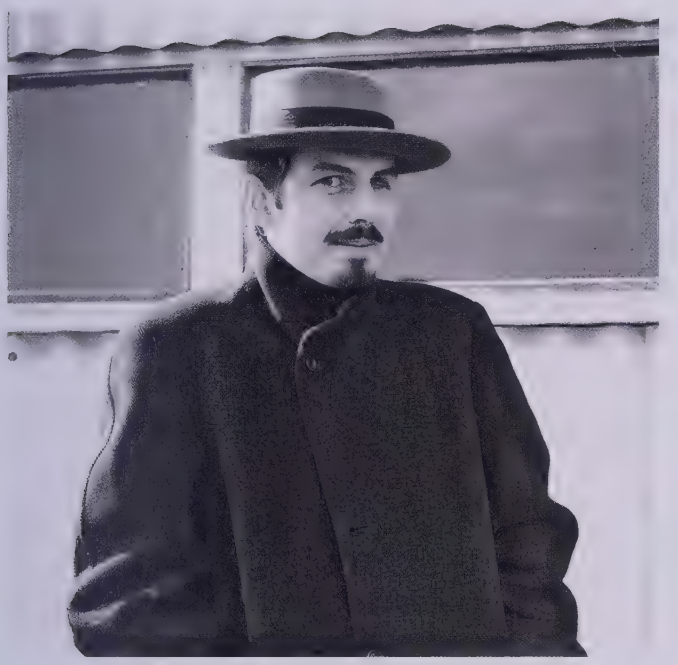
THESE
WEAK WEEKS OR
TICK WAY CHARADES
R IN A FATAL GAME

..... DRESSED IN SILENCE
MEANWHILE.....

BLACK MOUNTAIN REVIEW

STEVE EVANS

Jonathan Williams, *Dan Rice with Robert Creeley*, 1955. Gelatin silver print, 14 ½ x 14 inches



Robert Creeley as a Spanish assassin, 1954. Photo by Jonathan Williams.

Though it is one of the definitive projects of the third and final phase of Black Mountain College's existence, the *Black Mountain Review*'s seven-issue, four-year run (1954–57) seems in some ways to follow the arc of the college itself. The first four issues are compact, at sixty-four pages each, and give an impression of order and regularity. The reliance on geometric pattern and subtle color variations in Kitasona Katue's cover design, common to the first volume year, offers an homage of sorts to Josef Albers and his legacy at the college. With the fifth issue, the format shifted from a lean quarterly with a stable visual identity and a tight nucleus of regular contributors to a fat annual with distressed covers—omitting any reference to the journal's title or table of contents—and increasingly porous editorial borders. By the time the seventh and final issue—notable for its fusion of Black Mountain poetics with the emergent San Francisco Beat scene—entered the world, the surrender of the campus in North Carolina to financial and intellectual entropy was complete. Nevertheless, "whatever battle had been the case did seem effectually won."[1]

Olson's intention in founding the magazine and inviting Robert Creeley to be its editor had been to signal the viability of the college amid the widespread and well-founded concerns about its future and to manifest its reorientation from the plastic and visual to the literary and dramatic arts. The magazine proved inadequate to the first task, but it succeeded at the second. Drawing on that same explosion of epistolary energy that had united them since 1950—when Olson was forty and Creeley just twenty-four and both were in the first throes of poetic self-fashioning—the poets' collaboration on *Black Mountain Review* represented an opportunity not only to publish works of poetry and prose but also to air theoretical positions, pointed criticism, and topical commentary.[2] By emblazoning at the top left edge of the inaugural issue's cover the title of Olson's polemic "Against Wisdom as Such," Creeley foregrounded that critical edge, and the issue's first page—presenting Olson's "On First Looking out of La Cosa's Eyes"—leaves little doubt as to whose project constituted the "active center" around which the journal's "nucleus of activity" would be organized.[3]

But Creeley's own commitments equally—one might say ultimately—defined the journal's form and content. One measure of his formidable editorial acumen is the list of the major poems—including many by his own hand—that he selected for publication in *Black Mountain Review*. But the deftness and pervasiveness of his judgment and the canniness of his compositional intelligence are perhaps best appreciated by looking closely at a particular sequence of texts from the third issue, published in fall 1954. In the space of fifteen pages, bringing together poems by Robert Duncan, Tom Field, Creeley, Denise Levertov, and a prose introduction to a portfolio of photographs also signed by the editor, one encounters many of the formal gestures and thematic motifs that give

1. Robert Creeley, introduction to *Black Mountain Review*, 3 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 27. Creeley's pronouncement echoes William Carlos Williams: "no defeat is made up entirely of defeat." Williams, "The Descent," in *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, 1939–1962*, ed. Christopher MacGowan (1946; repr., New York: New Directions, 2001), 245.

2. See "On Black Mountain (II): Charles Olson Interviewed by Andrew S. Leinoff," *Olson: Journal of the Charles Olson Archives*, no. 8 (1978): 70. The inclusion of criticism and commentary in *Black Mountain Review* was a notable expansion of the goals of Cid Corman's poetry magazine, *Origin*, for which Olson had worked as a contributing editor.

3. Creeley, introduction to *Black Mountain Review*, iv. On the maneuvers that resulted in Olson's lead-off status in the *New American Poetry* anthology that brought Black Mountain poetics to a mass audience in 1960, see Alan Golding, "'The New American Poetry' Revisited, Again," *Contemporary Literature* 39, no. 2 (1998): 180–211.

the magazine its distinctive texture. As in a Creeley poem, tensions accumulate at each potential site of a human bond, and an atmosphere of lucid but lacerating despair permeates. Even so, the items in the sequence retain a certain independence from the editorial imagination that operates through them: Duncan's insouciance, Levertov's compassion, and photographer Peter Mitchum's matte gaze leaven and vary the editorial "mood."

Having opened the issue with a long prose piece by Bertram Lippman, Creeley segues to poetry with Duncan's gloriously ludic and recursive "Letters for Denise Levertov: An A Muse Ment." From the subtitle's punning disintegration of borders, "a song of the languagers" unfolds: words mutate based on slight variations in lettering, syllables migrate across line breaks, and punctuation marks (backslashes, bullets, parentheses) become compositional units equal to other marks on the dispersed field of the page. After Duncan's playful missive, the reader arrives at a short poem by Black Mountain College student (and painter) Tom Field, the first line of which seems to refer back to the poem it shares a page with: "It's not the play but the man and, / that makes the music, etc." Curt, colloquial ("there you have it"), enigmatic, handling line breaks as William Carlos Williams inspired Olson and Creeley also to do, Field's "Poem" boldly ends in all caps: "SO RAKE IT IN."

Creeley's own master class in jagged syntax and enjambment, "The Whip," follows on a page all to itself. That his name appears below the final line is significant, since Creeley employed a small troupe of pseudonyms and cryptic initials for the purposes of saying certain things in *Black Mountain Review*. This poem—which would later be included in Donald Allen's *New American Poetry* (1960) and in Creeley's debut collection *For Love* (1962)—is intended for the canon. Knotted with erotic tension, the poem's speaker passes a sleepless night beside one beloved woman, his thoughts obsessively reverting to "another woman I // also loved, had / addressed myself to in // a fit she / returned." "And there you have it," Field had written in the third line of his poem; Creeley slices his synopsis up: "That // encompasses it." Something like the "turn" in a sonnet occurs next. The lonely speaker makes an attempt on his partner's slumber: "I yelled, // but what is that? Ugh, / she said, beside me." In her hand's reflexive contact with his back, the titular whip has cracked, and the poem's account of its own genesis is complete: "she put // her hand on / my back, for which act // I think to say this / wrongly." The adverb "wrongly" comprises the only one-word line in the poem, and it acts back equally on the poetics of the utterance (imperfectly or erroneously composed) and its ethics (the utterance is infelicitous, perhaps even injurious).

Creeley's anguished inquiry into the conditions of possibility "for love"—what it demands (what must one do to be worthy of love?), what purpose it serves (what is love "for"?), what its defense might entail, especially in the lyric mode (how declare oneself "for" rather than "against" love?)—animates the corpus of the poems he put his name to in the years leading up to his first full-length collection, and it snakes through the pages of *Black Mountain Review* like a water moccasin through Lake Eden.[4] Levertov's "Something," which follows "The Whip" in this issue of *Black Mountain Review*, takes the form of a dialogue, in which the first speaker seeks an image capable of canceling out the vapidity of a moneyed woman on Madison Avenue "with little hope beyond the next hat." Is there "something," the poem asks, that might escape and perhaps unmake the economy of "deformed life" emblematized by "the maskfaced buyers of bric-a-brac"? The speaker's sentences are finished by her interlocutor, suggesting that her disgust at the greed and inequality is shared by her companion (or lover), as is her admiration for the uncontrollable vitality of "the kids from Junior High / yelling when they let 'em out, chattering in / quick Spanish." The image of these kids is one of a countervailing "force," a "ferocious energy" that can "stubbornly / flourish in the shadow of" domination.

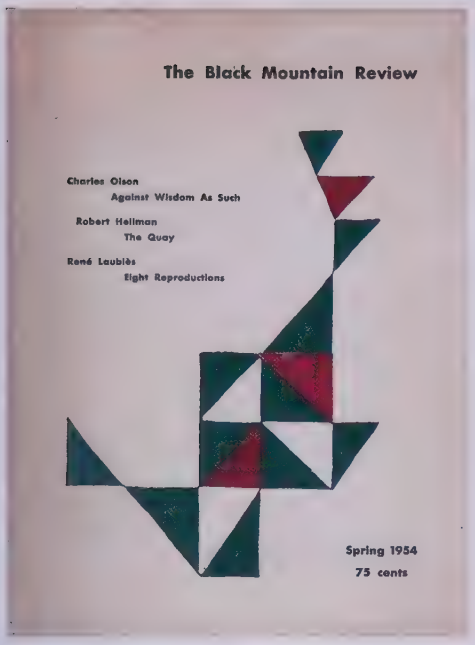
A second short poem by Field separates Levertov's exercise in dialectical image making from Creeley's ominous foreword to Mitchum's portfolio of photographs taken in a small French town in 1952. Field's poem returns to the economy of the heterosexual couple graphed in "The Whip" and, like Levertov's poem, attempts to negate a captivating image: the image of the woman who would "clear up / everything." The recognition with which it ends (depending upon how one scans the syntax) is a proto-feminist one: "A woman is herself // not inspiration."

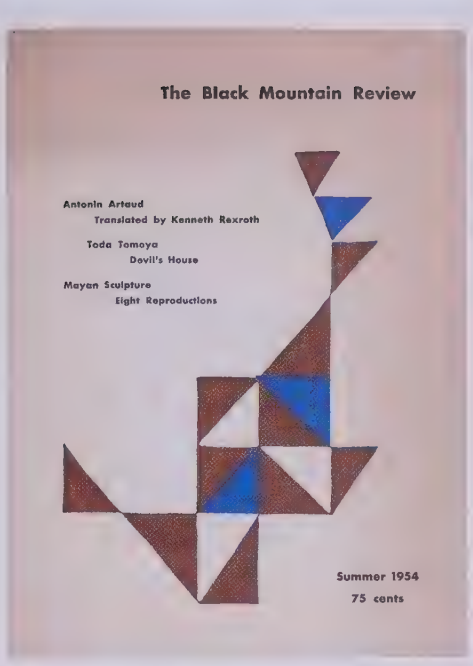
The consolation that Field's epiphany yields quickly dissolves by way of a six-paragraph acid bath that Creeley runs under the title "A Dilemma." Making no mention of the photographs that follow—black-and-white exterior shots, not particularly stylized, of rural French people captured mostly in isolation: three children, three adults, an elderly woman, and, in the only allusion to a relationship, a young boy and an aproned older woman who seems to be his grandmother: all offering some glimpse of bare life?—"R. C." outlines instead the vicious "logic" that constrains him and, by extension, his readers to choose between undesirable, perhaps overpowering, alternatives: mass extinction by hydrogen bomb on the one hand ("we can all die at one time") and a "dreary love" that amounts to little more than reciprocal contempt on the other ("it follows that, between a man and his wife, there must be constantly some means whereby she can spit on him—and he, likewise, on her"). "Wrong life," Theodor Adorno had declared a decade earlier, "cannot be lived rightly," no matter how strenuously the dilemmas are disguised as "choices."[5]

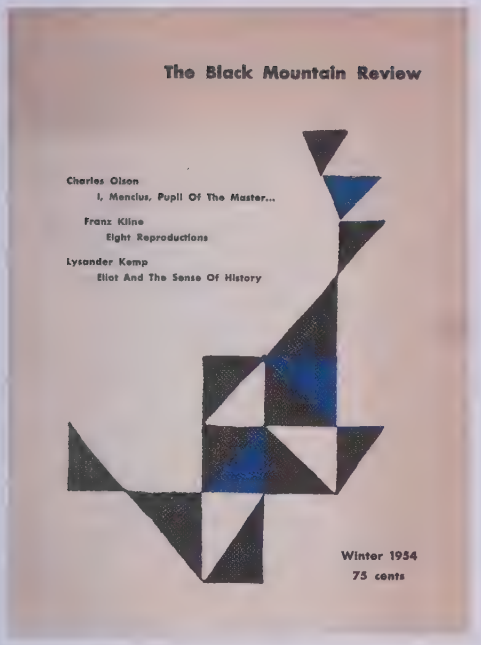
As an antidote to this formidable dose of nihilistic desperation (reminiscent of the "contagious despair" he brought to his second brief teaching stint at the college), "R. C." offers only two sentences, his own *Minima Moralia*, in closing: "I still want to [love], etc. Perhaps against the distortion, lying, deceit, viciousness, horror, cruelty, and all that, it will still be possible to make that most minimal of defenses—at least the knowledge that there might be others likewise confronted."[6]

In the pages of *Black Mountain Review*, as on the paths of Black Mountain College, the company of "others likewise confronted" was at once solicited and made manifest. That the tension between the utopian project and the empirical practice should have become "unmanageable" is no surprise. That artworks of such high order and integrity issued from the dilemmas, the contradictions, and the difficulties perhaps is.

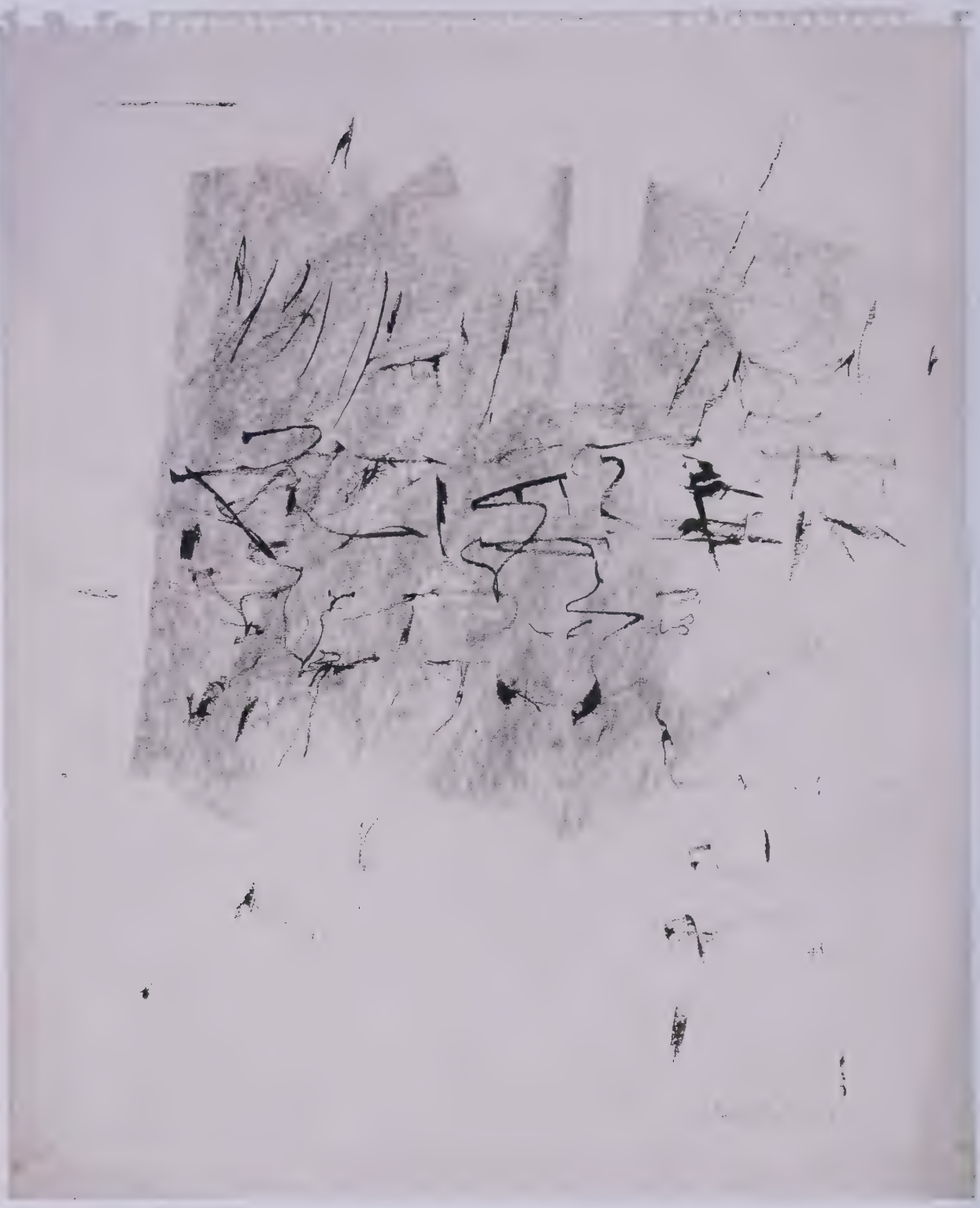
4. It also calls to mind Robert Rauschenberg's collage-derived title—*Should love come first?*—for a canvas painted and exhibited in 1951 and shortly thereafter destroyed.
5. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 39.
6. Creeley, introduction to *Black Mountain Review*, 28.







Covers of *Black Mountain Review*, 1954–57. Cover design issues 1–4: Kitasona Katue; issue 5: John Altoon; issue 6: Dan Rice; issue 7: Ed Corbett.



Dan Rice, *Untitled*, n.d. Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper, 16 7/8 x 13 7/8 inches.

Dan Rice, *Untitled*, n.d. Ink and graphite on paper, 16 7/8 x 13 7/8 inches.

"The Whip" (1954)
Robert Creeley

I spent a night turning in bed,
my love was a feather, a flat

sleeping thing. She was
very white

and quiet, and above us on
the roof, there was another woman I

also loved, had
addressed myself to in

a fit she
returned. That

encompasses it. But now I was
lonely, I yelled,

but what is that? Ugh,
she said, beside me, she put

her hand on
my back, for which act

I think to say this
wrongly.

JOSEPH FIORE

#7–54: The Gathering

BRYAN BARCENA

Joseph Fiore arrived at Black Mountain College near the apex of its trajectory. By the summer of 1946, the school was (relatively) flush with cash, inhabited by arguably the most prodigious thinkers to grace its campus and staging increasingly ambitious programming. He would depart ten years later as one of the last to leave a run down community holed up in ramshackle cabins. Fiore's extended tenure at the college, one initially financed by the GI Bill, witnessed his ascent from student to professor within three years of his arrival. His steadfast commitment to the college and the vacuum created by Josef Albers's departure in 1949 precipitated that transition. Fiore, along with Dan Rice, Basil King, Jorge Fick, Tom Field, and Gerald Van de Wiele, formed the last cluster of painters to emerge from a Black Mountain College that, by the mid-1950s, was focusing much of its attention on the written word.

Given Black Mountain's propensity for attracting mercurial personalities, Fiore's even-keeled and mild temperament earned him a description as the only "normal" person there.[1] Despite his measured demeanor, he shied away from Albers as a teacher, finding him too controlling and resistant to spontaneity. Fiore described Albers as "more of a pedagogue than a painter."[2] Instead, he felt an affinity with Ilya Bolotowsky, who substituted as painting instructor while Albers was on a research trip to Mexico. He gravitated toward Bolotowsky's more avuncular character, as well as his willingness to accept expressive gestures and less-resolved compositions. An apt student, Fiore's work was quickly transformed and refined thanks to the skills imparted by the college's many transitory guests and faculty. Fiore described himself as "a sponge," deliberately sopping up the techniques and aesthetics of a diverse set of instructors and colleagues, including Jacob Lawrence, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Jack Tworkov, Ben Shahn, Franz Kline, and Esteban Vicente.[3]

The vast majority of work Fiore produced at Black Mountain was lost to a fire in 1953, but the colorful collages that were spared seem to bridge the European-derived modernism on which the college was founded and the new path toward Abstract Expressionism, without showing a full commitment to either. *#7–54*, also referred to as *The Gathering* (1954), is a paradigmatic example of his synthesis of his instructors' and colleagues' styles: echoes of Motherwell's Cubist collages, reminders of Bolotowsky in a subtle gridded structure, gestural marks á la de Kooning, and Fiore's own color sensibility coalesce in this abstracted image of the local landscape. More than merely combining a diverse set of styles, Fiore sought to push midcentury abstraction into the realm of the gestural while not totally abandoning the representational. The carefully controlled yet expressive composition, anchored in blue- and orange-hued blocks, aptly demonstrates the alloverness and equality among elements that defined Abstract Expressionism. The title of the work, as well as the parity of the colored blocks, which hang together and yet remain autonomous, may hint at the communal dynamic, or rather lack thereof, in place during Fiore's latter years at the college—a gathering that is perhaps more accurately described as a fleeting congregation of talented equals rather than a faculty and student body.

Hazel Larsen Archer, *Joseph Fiore*, n.d. 7 x 6 ¼ inches. Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

Fiore's appointment as professor of painting and drawing was sudden, perhaps even premature, yet he proved a confident teacher who encouraged his students to look closely and develop their drawing skills through the observation of the natural world. In contrast to Albers's more structured approach, Fiore beckoned students to pull from their own inner wells of creativity, often counseling them to look away from the paper while they drew.[4] Fiore's time as head of the department ushered in an increased emphasis on personal expression, as he coached students to embrace roughness and experimentation. Maintaining the high level of artistic achievement and pedagogical excellence in the wake of Albers's departure was a herculean, if not impossible, task. Yet it was Fiore who would bring the lessons of all those who had spent time at the college to bear on its final students. His paintings exhibit the same ambition, to embody the modernist achievements of the college's twenty-four years while anticipating a new legacy of American painting.

1. Michael Rumaker, in *Joseph Fiore: The Nature of the Artist*, directed by Richard Kane (2013; Belfast, ME: Maine Farmland Trust, 2013), DVD
2. Theodore L. Prescott, "Joseph Fiore's Nature," in *Fiore/Drawing: 1946–2000* (Damariscotta, ME: The Firehouse Center for the Falcon Foundation, 2011).
3. See *Joseph Fiore: The Nature of the Artist*
4. James Thompson, *Imagining the Landscape: Joseph Fiore's Structures of Rhythm and Sentiment*, Black Mountain College Dossier #1 (Asheville, NC: Black Mountain Press, 1995), 11

Joseph Fiore, *#7–54: The Gathering*, 1954. Oil on canvas, 34 x 50 inches.

Esteban Vicente, *Untitled*, 1953. Collage with gouache on paper, 24 x 29 inches.

John Chamberlain, *Shortstop*, 1958. Painted and chromium-plated steel and iron, 58 x 44 x 18 inches.

James Bishop, *Untitled*, 1956. Oil on paper, 8 ⅜ x 9 ⅞ inches.

James Bishop, *Untitled*, 1956. Oil and colored pencil on paper, 8 x 10 ⅝ inches.

THE FORMATION OF THE MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY

KATHERINE MARKOSKI

Barbara Morgan, *Merce Cunningham—Root of Unfocus*, 1944/1997. Gelatin silver print, 10 3/8 x 13 1/8 inches.

Merce Cunningham at a picnic, n.d. Photo by Marie Tavroges Stilkind.

Merce Cunningham, *Changeling*, 1957. Photo by Richard Rutledge. Merce Cunningham Trust.

The task of the individual today is both to develop his own capacities and to learn to work in a coordinated way with others.

—*Black Mountain College Bulletin*[1]

Dancer-choreographer Merce Cunningham first visited Black Mountain College with composer John Cage in April 1948. He went on to perform and teach there five more times, during stays ranging from several days to six weeks. For his longest visit, in the summer of 1953, he arranged for seven dancers with whom he worked in New York to join him. This final residency afforded Cunningham both a rare sustained opportunity to engage with questions pertaining to group choreography and a respite from the modern-dance establishment, still dominated by the drama of figures like Martha Graham. Black Mountain, moreover, possessed specific features that made the school especially hospitable to Cunningham's burgeoning artistic concerns. The season turned out to mark a breakthrough: he finished four new works (*Banjo*, *Dime a Dance*, *Septet*, and *Untitled Solo*)—three of them for a group of dancers—and at summer's end Merce Cunningham and Company presented its inaugural programs.

Of perhaps greatest significance to Cunningham's developing project was the college's commitment to the positive reconciliation of individual and group: the institution was governed and maintained by community members, and faculty and students alike were urged to pursue their own interests. By 1948, Cunningham and Cage were considering a similar rapprochement in their collaborations through their use of rhythmic structure, a system that allowed them to compose independently with the understanding that, in performance, dance and music would intersect at prearranged points. The college community warmly received this innovative mode of working, and, in a larger sense, Black Mountain immediately rendered vivid for the pair the fecundity of operating at once autonomously and in consequential relation to others, confirming the viability of a creative direction largely unacknowledged elsewhere. Soon after first visiting, Cage wrote to Josef and Anni Albers, "Being in New York without leaving it for so long had made me believe that only within each one of us singly can what we require come about, but now at Black Mountain . . . I see that people can work still together."[2]

In subsequent years, Cunningham explored what the dynamic of his partnership with Cage could mean for his work with other dancers, a study lent momentum by their returns to Black Mountain. While the college's progressive pedagogy aimed for each student to realize his or her special abilities through an active rather than passive engagement with knowledge ("Our central and consistent effort is to teach method, not content," a 1952 publication claimed),[3] objective conditions at the small, isolated school consistently foregrounded the question of how such untrammeled thinkers might constructively coexist. In the 1950s, Black Mountain increasingly promoted an ongoing exchange of ideas among community members and stressed the importance of those interactions to

1. "Announcements 1948–1949," *Black Mountain College Bulletin-Newsletter* 6, no. 3 (April 1948), Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.
2. John Cage, letter to Anni and Josef Albers, 1948, undated. Original letter in the collection of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Bethany, CT, quoted with permission of the John Cage Trust.
3. "Spring Semester, February 11–June 7, 1952," *Black Mountain College Bulletin-Newsletter* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1952), Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina, Asheville, NC.

: Marianne Preger, Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, and Cynthia Stone in Cunningham's *Septet*, 1953. Photo by Walter Strate. Merce Cunningham Trust

: Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, Viola Farber, and William Davis in Cunningham's *Septet*, 1953. Photo by Harry Shunk. Merce Cunningham Trust.

Barbara Lloyd Dilley, Merce Cunningham, Carolyn Brown, and Viola Farber in Cunningham's *Septet*, 1953. Photo by M. Davis. Merce Cunningham Trust.

self-development.[4] During and through his time at the college, Cunningham found that the entanglement of solitary and joint ventures provided a theme and motivating force for his company choreography.

That Cunningham dancers reveal qualities particular to themselves in performance is now regularly acknowledged, but in 1953 he was still determining how a body's idiosyncrasies might meaningfully enter his dances. In choreographing *Suite by Chance* (1953), a work for five staged at Black Mountain, Cunningham first created a range of movement possibilities and then used chance procedures to arrange them. Owing to the introduction of aleatory processes, *Suite*'s dancers, unlike members of other companies, were not asked to emulate phrasing intuitive to the choreographer; rather, each was called on to discover how he or she might best realize his or her given movements. Reportedly, *Suite* was difficult not only to perform but also to watch, a difficulty bound up with the complexity of Cunningham's deliberate remove from the execution of the dance's steps.[5] Such a remove—heresy in a modern-dance world where the choreographer's personality reigned supreme—gained traction at Black Mountain, a place a faculty member described in 1951 as having "no single direction . . . but [providing] a situation in which, through study and experience, individuals may find and prove their own directions."[6] With *Septet*, Cunningham turned away from chance operations yet still allowed each dancer to find her "own direction": two women simultaneously performing arabesques are certainly following meticulous choreography, but that choreography seems to invite each to act in accordance with her own center of gravity instead of in lockstep with the other. Black Mountain and *Septet* alike showed Cunningham how such elastic movements could propel his work forward.[7]

Not that Cunningham's emphasis on his dancers' specific capabilities amounted to an atomistic approach; on the contrary, he sought to establish purposeful connections among his dancers, even as he abandoned the narrative or emotional frameworks guiding much contemporaneous modern dance. Early in *Septet*, four dancers occupy separate spaces throughout the stage as each completes a disparate set of movements, variously extending legs, bending torsos, and executing revolutions. This nascent interest in decentering the dance, one that came to be crucial to Cunningham's project, was perhaps encouraged by the absence of a proscenium in the college's dining hall, which also functioned as studio and stage—the space of Black Mountain inflecting his work in concrete as well as immaterial ways.[8] That spatial dispersal, teamed with the stark differences among assigned motions, brings into sharper focus the particularity of each dancer's efforts—yet because they act concurrently, the sequence also gives a strong sense of the dancers cooperatively bringing the work into being. *Banjo* likewise highlights its yoking of individual and group when, at one point, Cunningham traces a circle around the stage while three other dancers perform in unison. Something similar is again made perspicuous in *Septet* as Cunningham and three women articulate a series of multifigural poses: though contact among all four is crucial and nearly constant, it becomes clear that the dancers interweave themselves as autonomous beings, not out of any sense of dependence—physical, narrative, or otherwise. Such passages show how the singular body and the company can matter simultaneously, even how they can be constitutive of one another. Cunningham's fledgling company gave fresh form to concerns with which a responsive Black Mountain community was well versed; and, like that community, in allowing individuals to act meaningfully within a larger whole, Cunningham reimagined the group's potential as a medium for creative work.

4. In 1952–53, regular courses at Black Mountain were supplemented by Summer Institutes, each lasting eight weeks and bringing to North Carolina faculty from outside the college (Merce Cunningham was invited for the Summer Institute in the Arts.) The programs were designed to intensify vibrant exchanges among thinkers from different disciplines.

5. For more on *Suite by Chance*, see Carolyn Brown, *Chance and Circumstance: Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham* (New York: Knopf, 2007) 38–40.

6. M. C. Richards, Mary Caroline Richards papers, 1898–2007, bulk 1942–99, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (960036), quoted with permission of the John Cage Trust.

7. Cunningham's self-distancing from his work was also apparent in the premiere of *Dime a Dance*: the decision as to which seven of thirteen prepared dances were performed was left not to the choreographer but to the Black Mountain audience: enthusiastic volunteers each paid a dime to pick a card that named a dance from a deck.

8. See Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 212.

Merce Cunningham, *Changeling*, 1957. Photo by Richard Rutledge. Merce Cunningham Trust

Merce Cunningham, *Changeling*, 1957. Photo by Richard Rutledge. Merce Cunningham Trust.

RUTH ASAWA

Dancers

JENNIFER GROSS

Sculptor, arts-education pioneer and advocate, Ruth Asawa attended Black Mountain College from 1946 to 1948. Asawa came to Asheville from the Milwaukee State Teachers College, which she had attended with the aspiration to become an art teacher. But Asawa's time at Black Mountain transformed how she conceived of her own creative potential and ambition, and it was there that she learned from Josef Albers to savor experimentation with materials in her work. It was at Black Mountain that she gained the confidence and vision to pursue a career as an artist.

The summer sessions of 1946, which included Jacob Lawrence, curator and historian of photography Beaumont Newhall, and Jean Varda, and the summer program of 1948, which hosted John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Willem de Kooning, and R. Buckminster Fuller, had a profound impact on the young Asawa. Dance in particular influenced her as she began to integrate biomorphic shapes into her otherwise rigorously geometric paintings and drawings. These anthropomorphic forms would eventually become the primary underpinnings of her sculptural work.

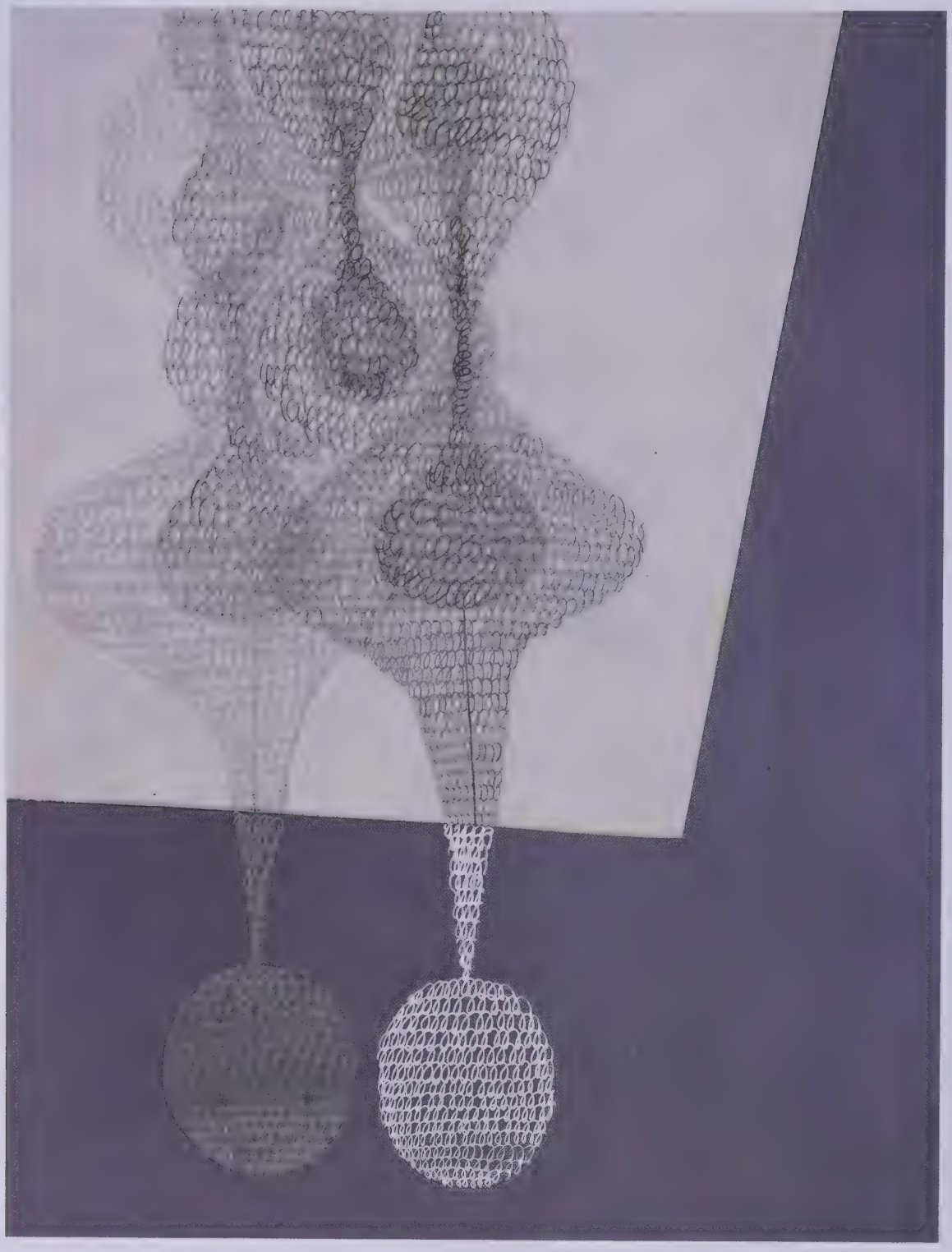
Asawa was a student in Cunningham's dance class, and she credited what she learned about the expressive capacity of the human body as strongly determining her aspirations for future work.[1] *Dancers* (c. 1948) reveals the influence of Black Mountain's multidisciplinary engagement with practitioners of dance, music, architecture, design, photography, painting, and sculpture, and the drawing displays the young artist's interest in the liquidity of form. Suspended in a sea of saturated blue pigment, cellular forms appear to float in relation to one another. On closer inspection, some can be read as mask-like heads. That year, Cunningham performed a work titled *Orestes* at Black Mountain, and it is known that he integrated a long-standing interest in Native American masks into his work during this time.[2] The exploration and expression of indigenous world cultures was a common practice among modern choreographers of the period, including Ted Shawn, who was also a lecturer at Black Mountain.

On a number of trips that were sponsored by the Quakers before and during her time at Black Mountain, Asawa traveled to Mexico, where she learned techniques for crocheting baskets that would inspire suspended crocheted-wire sculptures. During this period, Asawa completed additional works that were also titled *Dancer*, in which similar abstract elements were positioned in direct correspondence to one another, underscoring a reading of paired figures and further foreshadowing the anthropomorphism of her crocheted-wire sculptural installations.

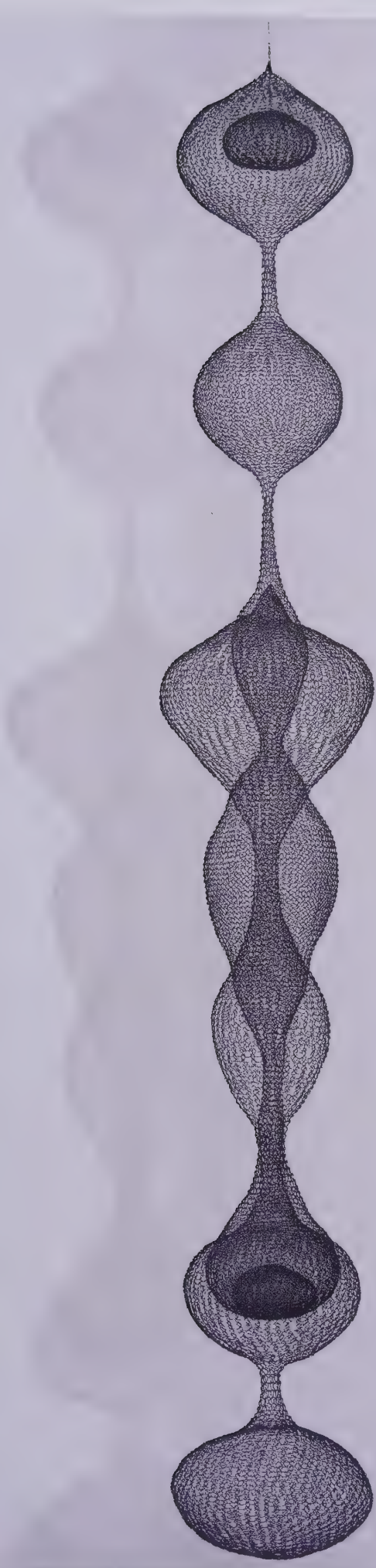
Hazel Larsen Archer, *Portrait of Ruth Asawa*, 1947. Gelatin silver print, 5 ¾ x 3 ⅛ inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection. Gift of Michael and Catherine Urbain.

1. Abbie Lanier, the artist's daughter, in conversation with the author, August 5, 2014.
2. Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 156

Ruth Asawa, *Dancers (BMC.56)*, c. 1948. Oil on blotting paper, 12 x 19 inches.



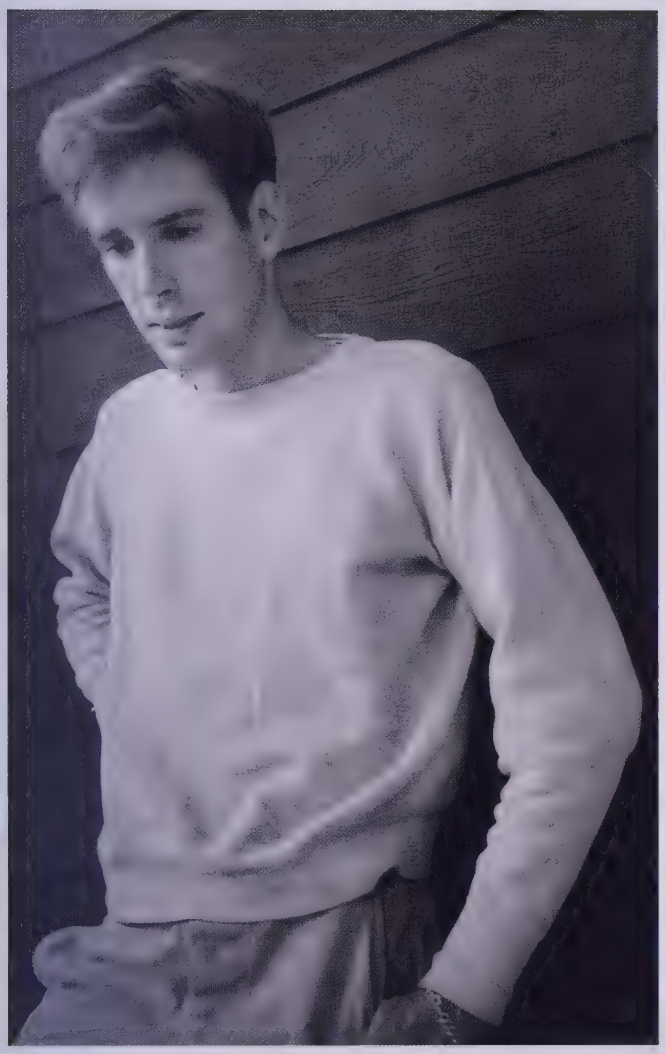
above Ruth Asawa, *Untitled Sculpture Drawing (S.F.034AA)*, 1951–53. Ink on paper, 11 x 8 ½ inches.
opposite Ruth Asawa, *Untitled (S.272)*, c. 1955. Copper and iron wire, 108 x 15 x 15 inches.



INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

GLORIA SUTTON

Upper Square at the Gate Hill Cooperative, late 1950s. Photo by Walter Rosenblum.



Hazel Larsen Archer, *Paul Williams*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 9 5/8 x 5 5/8 inches. Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Art Center.

By 1953, Black Mountain College had become reliant on the financial gifts and loans of two former students, Paul Williams, who was a resident architect there, and his wife, Vera. The acrimony and disorganization that characterized the school's final years gradually eroded the couple's allegiance to it, and their investment waned. Concurrently, the Williamses' interest in intentional communities intensified, thanks at least in part to the influence of Black Mountain creative-writing faculty member Paul Goodman and his architect brother, Percival. In the book *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (1947), the Goodmans had espoused a "sociopsychological" approach to city planning and community building, which galvanized the Williamses to leave the mountains of western North Carolina and purchase nearly a hundred rural acres of sloping hillsides near Stony Point, New York, about thirty-five miles north of Manhattan.[1] There they would establish the Gate Hill Cooperative in 1954, which is still in existence.

In an effort not to emulate but to refine the lessons imparted by Black Mountain College, Paul and Vera Williams founded Gate Hill to run as a cooperative (as opposed to a commune or other countercultural space) and to provide a generative environment for the interdisciplinary practices that have since come to define American postwar art and craft initiatives. Known as "the Land" by the artists, composers, writers, and potters who built their homes, studios, and personal lives there, Gate Hill comprised an arrangement of buildings designed by Paul Williams in partnership with each intended resident. Most of the structures were designed to fulfill his "dream [of building] a quasi-Italian hillside village with houses built around a square and most of the land left free and wild for all to enjoy."[2] This aspiration reflected his recognition of the Goodmans' assertion that hillside construction with open squares facilitated close personal interactions. The custom-built homes were arranged on stepped hillsides, with open spaces between the structures. The first to be built was the pottery studio for Karen Karnes and David Weinrib, because their functional wares provided the community with a key source of income. Karnes worked relentlessly in this studio for the following twenty-five years to keep the showroom stocked with her popular pots and vessels, as well as with the hand-built planters, stools, and fireplaces that she also made and exhibited.[3] After the initial group established Gate Hill Coop, a growing number of people moved to the Land, including Black Mountain alums Patsy Lynch Wood and her husband, LaNoue Davenport; Ray Johnson; and Stan VanDerBeek.

Though decidedly rustic and rural, Gate Hill was not entirely isolated. Its activities were intrinsically linked to the international neo-avant-garde, and the events orchestrated on the Land not only received wide recognition but also attracted a range of collaborators and frequent visitors, such as choreographer Merce Cunningham, dancer Carolyn Brown, and her husband, the composer Earle Brown. This fact is exemplified by the critical reception bestowed on VanDerBeek's *Movie-Drome*, a conceptual theater the artist made from a repurposed top of a grain silo, which became an icon of American

1. Paul Goodman and Percival Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (1947; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 6, 19.
2. Carolyn Brown, *Chance and Circumstance: Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 106.
3. Among these earliest residents, only David Tudor, who stayed until 1995, surpassed Karnes's time at Gate Hill. On Karnes's work and life and for one of the most detailed accounts of Gate Hill Coop, see *A Chosen Path: The Ceramic Art of Karen Karnes*, ed. Mark Shapiro (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

Expanded Cinema practices of the 1960s. *Movie-Drome* was VanDerBeek's prototype for a communications system—a global network of *Movie-Dromes* linked to orbiting satellites that would store and transmit images.[4] Its public unveiling in the fall of 1966 was covered in *Newsweek*, *Film Culture*, and the *Village Voice* and drew the attendance of esteemed experimental filmmakers, including Shirley Clarke, Ed Emshwiller, Agnés Varda, and Andy Warhol, and critic Annette Michelson, who all made the drive up from New York City. A hand-sketched map circulated by VanDerBeek indicated Gate Hill's relatively remote location, with the northern-most tip of Manhattan being the last discernable signpost. This somewhat formal tour was followed by a stream of casual visits by a range of collaborators and friends of those who lived at Gate Hill in the 1960s, including composers Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez, and Morton Feldman; artists Jasper Johns, Richard Lippold, and Robert Rauschenberg; potter Peter Voulkos; and the Living Theater's Judith Malina and Julian Beck; among others.

An informal atmosphere in which children were encouraged to take part was cultivated at Gate Hill Coop through community activities like ad hoc screenings, family picnics, studio visits, and coordinated clean-up days. By contrast, another intentional community that developed in reaction to, if not rejection of, Black Mountain College stood as an alternate model: Pond Farm, an intentional community situated outside Guerneville, California, in the Russian River Valley, was founded by architect Gordon Herr. Herr's wife, Jane, had inherited wealth that allowed them to purchase 160 acres of previously farmed land in the redwoods of Sonoma County, about seventy miles north of San Francisco. The Herrs persuaded Bauhaus-trained potter Marguerite Wildenhain to lead the Pond Farm Workshops from 1949 to 1952.[5] Her husband, Frans Wildenhain, focused on ceramic sculpture. They were joined by others who had ties to Black Mountain College—most notably, Trude Guermonprez, who had previously taught with Anni Albers, even filling in for Albers when she was on sabbatical. Marguerite Wildenhain shaped all aspects of Pond Farm's activities to reflect her own rigorous methods, including rejecting beginners and having students destroy all of the pots and forms that they had created over the span of their time working in the studios. Labor-intensive and ascetic, Pond Farm was, in the words of Wildenhain, purposefully "not a school" but "a way of life."[6] Though she later participated in Black Mountain's Pottery Seminar, in the fall of 1952, Wildenhain declined Charles Olson's offer to join the faculty, and instead returned to live at Pond Farm from 1952 until her death in 1985.

In the second edition of *Communitas*, published in 1960, the Goodmans updated the section on intentional communities to address their often-inevitable dissolution. By "disintegrating," these communities "irradiate society with people who have been profoundly touched by the excitement of community life, who do not forget the advantages but try to realize them in new ways."[7] The Goodmans suggested that they "are like those 'little magazines' and 'little theaters' that do not outlive their first few performances, yet from them comes all the vitality of the next generation of everyone's literature."[8] In the case of Black Mountain, this phenomenon can be found directly in the rise of such journals as *Black Mountain Review* and Jonathan Williams's Jargon Society, which transmitted the ideas of the college's dispersed community of writers and poets after its closing. And more diffusely, the notion of community that undergirds *Communitas* can be seen in the turn toward socially engaged practices within more recent contemporary art.[9] The concept of art as a "social practice" and the self-organization of artist-run collectives that have come to prominence within contemporary art since the 1990s, for example, reflect many of the motives and desires of those who headed to the intentional communities that developed out of Black Mountain. What is compelling about the Goodmans' assessment is that the breakup of intentional communities is characterized not as a loss or failure but as a type of "transitoriness" which remains "part of the perfection" of "the most intensely motivated intentional communities."[10]

4. For more information, see Gloria Sutton, "Critical Limits: Vision '65 and Black Mountain College," chap. 2 of *The Experience Machine: Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome and Expanded Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

5. For a comprehensive and nuanced account of Pond Farm's vital role in the development of studio craft and Wildenhain's experience as a Jewish refugee, see Jenni Sorkin, "Pond Farm and the Summer Craft Experience," in *West of Center Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965–1977*, ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 128–39.

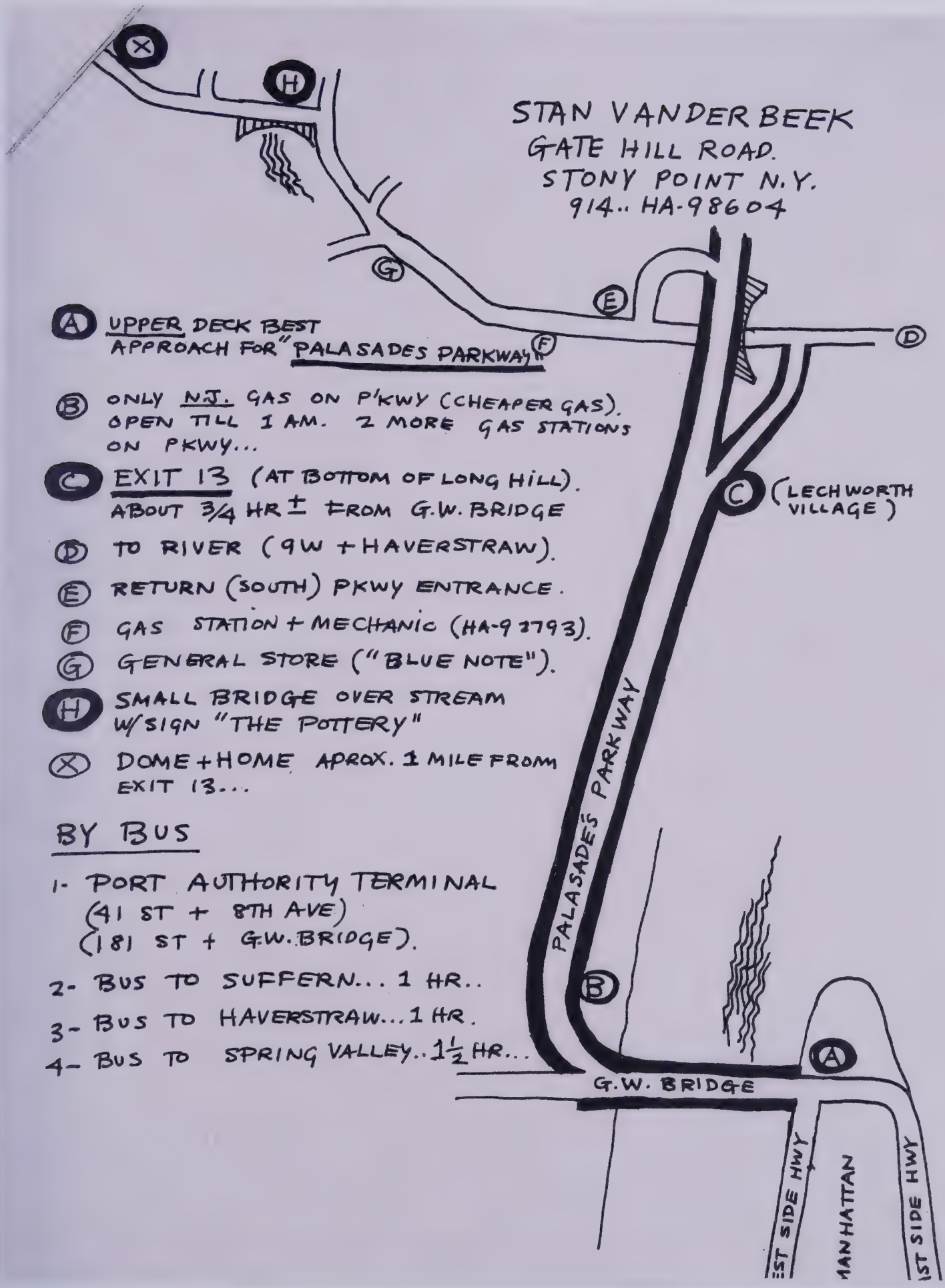
6. Marguerite Wildenhain, *The Invisible Core: A Potter's Life and Thoughts* (Tokyo: Kondansha International, 1973), 145; cited in ibid., 129.

7. Goodman and Goodman, *Communitas*, 109.

8. Ibid.

9. On the rise and ethics of dialogical art, see Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (University of California Press, 2004).

10. Goodman and Goodman, *Communitas*, 109.


STAN VANDER BEEK
GATE HILL ROAD.
STONY POINT N.Y.
914.. HA-98604
(A) UPPER DECK BEST APPROACH FOR "PALASADES PARKWAY"
(B) ONLY N.J. GAS ON P'KWY (CHEAPER GAS). OPEN TILL 1 AM. 2 MORE GAS STATIONS ON PKWY...
(C) EXIT 13 (AT BOTTOM OF LONG HILL). ABOUT 3/4 HR ± FROM G.W. BRIDGE
(D) TO RIVER (9W + HAVERSTRAW).
(E) RETURN (SOUTH) PKWY ENTRANCE.
(F) GAS STATION + MECHANIC (HA-9 1793).
(G) GENERAL STORE ("BLUE NOTE").
(H) SMALL BRIDGE OVER STREAM W/SIGN "THE POTTERY"
(X) DOME + HOME APROX. 1 MILE FROM EXIT 13...
BY BUS
1- PORT AUTHORITY TERMINAL (41 ST + 8TH AVE) (181 ST + G.W. BRIDGE).
2- BUS TO SUFFERN... 1 HR..
3- BUS TO HAVERSTRAW... 1 HR.
4- BUS TO SPRING VALLEY.. 1 1/2 HR...
(LECHWORTH VILLAGE)
PALASADES PARKWAY
G.W. BRIDGE
EAST SIDE HWY
MANHATTAN
EAST SIDE HWY

Stan VanDerBeek's hand-drawn map to the Gate Hill Cooperative, c. 1966.
Courtesy the Estate of Stan VanDerBeek.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

ANNI ALBERS

Monte Albán, 1936
Silk, linen, and wool
57 ½ x 44 ⅛ inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard G. Leahy

With Verticals, 1946
Cotton and linen
61 x 46 ½ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Drawing for a Knot, 1947
Graphite on tracing paper
23 x 17 ⅛ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Knot 2, 1947
Gouache on paper
17 x 21 ⅛ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

La Luz I, 1947
Cotton, hemp, and metallic gimp
18 ½ x 32 ½ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Drawing for a Knot, 1948
Gouache on paper
13 ¾ x 10 ¾ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Cityscape, 1949
Bast and cotton
17 ½ x 26 ½ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Free-Hanging Room Divider, c. 1949
Cotton, cellophane, and braided horsehair
87 x 32 ½ inches
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Gift of the designer, 1960

Free-Hanging Room Divider, c. 1949
Jute and Lurex
53 x 34 inches
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Gift of the designer, 1960

Black-White-Gold I, 1950
Cotton, jute, and metallic ribbon
25 x 19 inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

ANNI ALBERS AND ALEXANDER REED

Neck Piece, 1940
Aluminum strainer, paper clips, and chain
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Necklace, c. 1940
Bobby pins on metal-plated chain
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Necklace from Hardware, c. 1940
Washers and grosgrain ribbon
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Neck Piece, c. 1940/1988
Corks, bobby pins, and thread
Collection of Mary Emma Harris, New York.
Courtesy the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

JOSEF ALBERS

Pyramid of Tenajuca, n.d.
Gelatin silver print
6 ⅞ x 9 ⅞ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Untitled (Grand Pyramid at Tenayuca), n.d.
Gelatin silver print
7 x 9 ⅞ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Encircled, 1933
Woodcut
Image: 9 ½ x 13 ½ inches
Sheet: 13 ¾ x 20 ⅛ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Black Frame, 1934
Oil on Masonite
15 ½ x 23 ⅞ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

b and p, 1937
Oil on Masonite
23 ⅞ x 23 ¾ inches
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
Estate of Karl Nierendorf, By purchase

Six Untitled Photographs of Tenayuca, 1937
Gelatin silver prints
Four prints: 3 ¼ x 4 ¾ inches each
Two prints: 4 ¾ x 3 ¼ inches each
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Desk for Black Mountain College students, c. 1938
Wood
29 x 44 x 26 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Five Untitled Photographs of Monte Albán, 1939
Gelatin silver prints
Four prints: 3 ¼ x 4 ¾ inches each
One print: 4 ¾ x 3 ¼ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Black Mountain College student *matière* studies, c. 1940–49
Kodachrome slides
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Growing, 1940
Oil on Masonite
24 x 26 ¾ inches
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Gift of Mrs. Charlotte Mack

Leaf Study IX, c. 1940
Leaves on paper
28 x 24 ¾ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Photographs of Black Mountain College Students and Faculty, Valentine's Day Ball, 1940
19 Kodachrome slides
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Sanctuary, from the *Graphic Tectonic* series, 1942
Lithograph
Image: 8 ⅝ x 15 ¾ inches;
Sheet: 19 x 24 inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Tenayuca, 1943
Oil on Masonite
22 ½ x 43 ½ inches
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Purchase with the aid of funds from Mr. and Mrs. Richard N. Holdman and Madeleine Haas Russel

Astatic, 1944
Woodcut on Japanese nacre kozo paper
Image: 13 ¾ x 9 inches
Sheet: 17 ½ x 11 ⅛ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Multiplex A, 1947
Woodcut
Image: 18 x 12 inches
Sheet: 16 ½ x 12 ½ inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Variant/Adobe, 1947
Oil on Masonite
14 x 27 inches
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

DON ALTER

Construction, n.d.
Collage on paper
8 ½ x 7 ½ inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum.
Gift of Josef Albers

Transformation, 1949
Casein on paper
5 ¼ x 8 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

LEO AMINO

Carnivorous Plant #22, 1952
Polyester resin, wire, netting, and thread on wood base
23 1/8 x 9 1/4 x 6 7/8 inches
Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, Gift of Mrs. Julie Amino

HAZEL LARSEN ARCHER

John Cage, n.d.
Gelatin silver print
9 3/8 x 6 3/8 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Anni Albers, c. 1948
Gelatin silver print
9 x 6 1/4 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Josef Albers, c. 1948
Gelatin silver print
8 1/2 x 5 7/8 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Minimum House, Black Mountain College, 1948
Gelatin silver print
9 1/2 x 6 7/8 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection. Gift of Albert Lanier

Minimum House, Black Mountain College, 1948
Gelatin silver print
8 5/8 x 6 7/8 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection. Gift of W. Pete Jennerjahn

Quiet House Doors, 1948
Gelatin silver print
9 1/2 x 6 5/8 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Buckminster Fuller inside His Geodesic Dome, 1949
Gelatin silver print
9 1/2 x 9 1/4 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Students with Buckminster Fuller's Dome, 1949
Gelatin silver print
6 1/8 x 9 7/8 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Elizabeth Schmitt Jennerjahn and Robert Rauschenberg, c. 1952
Gelatin silver print
6 1/4 x 9 1/4 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Elizabeth Schmitt Jennerjahn, c. 1952–53
Gelatin silver print
9 1/4 x 9 1/4 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Katherine Litz in Dining Hall, c. 1952–53
Gelatin silver print
7 x 6 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Merce Cunningham, c. 1952–53
Gelatin silver print
8 3/4 x 5 7/8 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Merce Cunningham Dancing, c. 1952–53
Gelatin silver print
8 3/4 x 5 7/8 inches
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

RUTH ASAWA

BMC (BMC.76), n.d.
Ink on paper
21 1/2 x 17 1/2 inches
Collection of Paul Lanier

Collage of Fern Leaves, n.d.
Leaves on paper
16 3/4 x 20 inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum. Gift of Josef Albers

Studies of Hands and Feet, n.d.
Ink on tracing paper
19 x 24 inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum. Gift of Josef Albers

Dancers (BMC.56), c. 1948
Oil on blotting paper
12 x 19 inches
Weverka Family Collection

Meander Straight Lines (BMC.59), c. 1948
Pen, ink, and gouache on paper
7 7/8 x 13 1/2 inches
Weverka Family Collection

Untitled (S. 272), c. 1955
Copper and iron wire
108 x 15 x 15 inches
Private collection

Untitled Sculpture Drawing (S.F.034AA), 1951–53
Ink on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches
Collection of Hudson Lanier Family

Portrait of David Tudor, c. 1960
Pen, ink, and gouache on paper
22 3/8 x 17 1/2 inches
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

JAMES BISHOP

Untitled, 1956
Oil on paper
8 3/8 x 9 7/8 inches
Courtesy Annemarie Verna Gallery

Untitled, 1956
Oil and colored pencil on paper
8 x 10 5/8 inches
Courtesy Annemarie Verna Gallery

ILYA BOLOTOWSKY

Upright in Gold and Violet, 1945
Oil on canvas
41 x 21 7/8 inches
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection

JOSEF BREITENBACH

John Dewey, 1943
Gelatin silver print
13 5/8 x 10 5/8 inches
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Abstraction (Thin Ice in the Woods), 1946
Gelatin silver print
13 3/4 x 10 7/8 inches
The Josef and Yaye Breitenbach Foundation. Courtesy Gitterman Gallery, New York

The Mechanic, New York, c. 1946–49
Gelatin silver print
13 7/8 x 11 inches
The Josef and Yaye Breitenbach Foundation. Courtesy Gitterman Gallery, New York

Untitled, c. 1946–49
Gelatin silver print
13 3/4 x 11 inches
The Josef and Yaye Breitenbach Foundation. Courtesy Gitterman Gallery, New York

FAITH MURRAY BRITTON

Matière Study, 1941
Paper, paint, fabric, corrugated paper, magazine images, wheat seeds, and other materials
15 x 20 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection

JOHN CAGE

Water Music, 1952
India ink on 10 sheets of paper with colophon
Sheet: 11 x 17 inches each
Overall: 54 3/8 x 33 3/4 inches
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Purchased with funds from an anonymous donor

Williams Mix, 1952
Marker on paper
8 1/2 x 11 inches
Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Concert for Piano and Orchestra, 1957–58
First edition offset reproduction of original ink on paper
Four of 64 sheets, 11 x 17 inches
Collection of C. F. Peters Corporation

HARRY CALLAHAN

Eleanor, 1947
Gelatin silver print
4 3/4 x 2 5/8 inches
Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College, Chicago

Eleanor, Chicago, 1949
Gelatin silver print
7 5/8 x 9 5/8 inches
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. J. Patrick Kennedy

MARY CALLERY

Study for Pyramid, 1949
Bronze
25 1/4 x 18 x 16 1/4 inches
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Gift of W. W. Crocker

NICHOLAS CERNOVICH AND KATHERINE LITZ

Thoughts Out of Season, c. 1952
16mm film, approx. 3:00 min.
The Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Black Textures, n.d.
Collage
8 1/2 x 9 inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum.
Gift of Josef Albers

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

Shortstop, 1958
Painted and chromium-plated steel and iron
58 x 44 x 18 inches
Collection of Jeffrey Sprecher

MERCE CUNNINGHAM

Changeling, 1958
Black-and-white video, 6:40 min.
Merce Cunningham Trust. Courtesy Studio Hamburg GMBH

Septet, 1964
Digital black-and-white video, 18:00 min.
Directed by Hakki Sepala
Location: Abo Svenska Theater, Helsinki
Dancers: Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, William Davies, Barbara Lloyd, Viola Farber, Steve Paxton
Merce Cunningham Trust

FIELDING DAWSON

Cy Twombly at Black Mountain, 1951
Casein on butcher paper
50 x 24 inches
Fielding Dawson Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut

Charles Olson, 1956
Ink and collage on cardboard mounted on burlap
11 7/8 x 12 1/2 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection.
Gift of the Estate of Jonathan Williams

JOSÉ DE CREEFT

The Cloud, 1939
Stone
13 7/8 x 12 3/8 x 8 1/4 inches
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

ELAINE DE KOONING

Untitled #16, 1948
Oil on canvas
19 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches
Private collection, Cambridge, MA

Untitled Drawing, 1948
Enamel on paper on canvas
13 1/2 x 16 1/4 inches
Collection of Susan and Larry Marx, Aspen, CO.
Courtesy Neal Meltzer Fine Art

Untitled Drawing, 1948
Enamel on paper on canvas
13 1/2 x 16 1/4 inches
Collection of Susan and Larry Marx, Aspen, CO.
Courtesy Neal Meltzer Fine Art

WILLEM DE KOONING

Asheville, 1948
Sapolin on paper
19 1/8 x 24 inches
Saint Louis Art Museum. Museum Purchase

Asheville, 1948
Oil and enamel on cardboard
25 5/8 x 31 7/8 inches
The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Asheville #1, 1948
Oil and graphite on paper
14 1/2 x 12 inches
Collection of Susan and Larry Marx, Aspen, CO

LYONEL FEININGER

A Group of Houses and Figures, c. 1949
Paint on wood
Dimensions variable
The Art Institute of Chicago. Bequest of Maxine Kunstadter

JOSEPH FIORE

#7–54: The Gathering, 1954
Oil on canvas
34 x 50 inches
Collection of John E. Cram

Black Mountain, Lake Eden, 1954
Watercolor on paper
14 x 18 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection

R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER

Three Frequency Geodesic Sphere, n.d.
Graphite and felt-tip pen on paper
8 1/2 x 10 1/4 inches
Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries

Great Circle Sphere Model, n.d.
Steel
20 1/4 inches diameter
Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries

Great Circle Sphere Model, n.d.
Aluminum and steel
20 1/2 inches diameter
Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries

LOLITA GEORGIA

Weaving class notebook, 1935
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

JACQUELINE GOUREVITCH

Kenneth Noland, n.d.
Gelatin silver print
10 x 8 inches
Courtesy the artist

Looms, n.d.
Gelatin silver print
8 x 10 inches
Courtesy the artist

Staircase in the Studies Building with Mailbox, 1950
Gelatin silver print
9 5/8 x 6 1/2 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, Gift of the artist

Window and Sun, 1951
Oil on canvas
34 x 28 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection.
Gift of the artist

PETER GRIPPE

Man with Hammer, 1941
Terra-cotta
14 x 10 x 15 inches
Allentown Art Museum, The Grippe Collection

ATI GROPIUS JOHANSEN

Still Life, Leaves, n.d.
Watercolor on wove paper
23 x 20 inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum. Gift of Josef Albers

Untitled Woman and Two Men, n.d.
Ink on paper
8 ⅛ x 16 ¾ inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection. Gift of the artist

TRUDE GUERMONPREZ

First Snow, n.d.
Cotton and wool
75 x 42 ½ inches
Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York

Leaf Study VI, 1948
Natural linen and jute
20 x 8 inches
Collection of Linda and Gregg MacMillan

SHŌJI HAMADA

Tea Bowl, n.d.
Glazed stoneware
5 ⅜ x 3 ½ inches diameter
The Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Mitsuru Tajima and Mr. Shinsaku Hamada

Vase, c. 1950
Glazed stoneware
14 ⅛ x 12 ⅜ inches
The Art Institute of Chicago. Rice Foundation Fund; Bertha E. Brown Endowment

LOU HARRISON

The Glyph, 1951
Ink on staff paper
Three pages: 8 ½ x 11 inches
Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

FANNIE HILLSMITH

The Desk, 1946
Oil on canvas
37 ¼ x 26 ⅜ inches
The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, SC

ELIZABETH JENNERJAHN

Cross, 1949
Wool
12 ½ x 10 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Untitled (Weaving), c. 1951
Mixed fabrics
25 ½ x 26 ¼ inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection. Gift of W. Pete Jennerjahn.

W. PETE JENNERJAHN

Color and Design: Color Study Demonstration of Principles, n.d.
Three printed text panels and fourteen panels of collaged Color-aid paper on board
14 x 14 ¾ inches each
The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

Study in Orange, Gray, and Ochre, c. 1947
Oil on Masonite
20 x 16 inches
Courtesy Yvette Torres Fine Art

JESS

Section through Hairy Skin, c. 1956
Collage on paper
28 x 29 inches
Collection of Robin Blaser and David Farwell

JESS AND ROBERT DUNCAN

Song of the Borderguard, c. 1955
Ink on paper
14 x 12 inches
The Jess Collins Trust

RAY JOHNSON

Asawa Summer 1946, 1946
Ink and watercolor on paper
3 ⅜ x 6 inches
Weverka Family Collection

Untitled, c. 1951
Gouache and watercolor on paper, mounted on board
27 ¾ x 27 ¼ inches
The Ray Johnson Estate, Courtesy Richard L. Feigen and Co.

Letter to Ruth (326 Monroe St. NYC 2 Canal 8–4771), c. 1952
Ink on stationery
10 ½ x 7 ¼ inches
Lanier Family Collection, San Francisco

Untitled (Moticos with Legs and Letters), c. 1953–54
Graphite, gouache, and printed-paper collage, mounted on cardboard
11 x 6 ½ inches
The Ray Johnston Estate, Courtesy Richard L. Feigen and Co.

CLEMENS KALISCHER

Merce Cunningham Dance Class, 1948
Gelatin silver print
14 x 11 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection

Merce Cunningham in The Ruse of Medusa, 1948
Gelatin silver print
10 x 8 inches
Collection of the artist

KAREN KARNES

Untitled (Candleholder), 1950
Glazed earthenware
11 x 6 inches
Collection of Beverly A. Berman and Jeffrey K. Backerman

Double Vase, 1951
Earthenware
9 ½ x 13 ¾ inches
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY. Purchase Prize given by Lord and Taylor, 16th Ceramic National, 1951

FRANZ KLINE

Painting, 1952
Oil on canvas
65 x 41 ¾ inches
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. Gift of Walter K. Gutman

A. LAWRENCE KOCHER

Side Table, 1942
Wood
21 x 23 ½ inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Stool, 1942
Wood
16 ⅛ x 11 ⅝ inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

WILLIAM ALBERT LANIER

Front Elevation for Minimum House, Black Mountain College, 1947
Ink on paper
11 x 17 ¼ inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection. Gift of the artist

Plan for Minimum House, Black Mountain College, 1947
Ink on paper
13 ½ x 18 ½ inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection. Gift of the artist

Rear Elevation, Minimum House, Black Mountain College, 1947
Ink on paper
11 x 16 inches
Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection. Gift of the artist

GWENDOLYN KNIGHT LAWRENCE

Bayou, 1941
Gouache on paper
12 ½ x 20 inches
Amistad Research Center, New Orleans

JACOB LAWRENCE

Watchmaker, 1946
Tempera and graphite on paper
30 ½ x 21 ½ inches
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn

LORE KADDEN LINDENFELD

Woven Sample: 8 Harness Group Weaving, 1945–48
Wool
6 ½ x 10 ½ inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Color Study: Black, Gold, Red, c. 1945–48
Paint on paper
8 ½ x 8 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Black/White Hanging, 1948
Cotton
71 ⅞ x 23 ⅞ inches
Smithsonian American Art Museum. Gift of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation

RICHARD LIPPOLD

Sketch for The Sun, 1953
Ink and graphite on paper
14 ¾ x 19 ½ inches
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Robert Beverly Hale

KATHERINE LITZ

The Glyph, 1977
Digitized video, 7:40 min.
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

BARBARA MORGAN

Merce Cunningham—Root of Unfocus, 1944/1997
Gelatin silver print
10 ⅜ x 13 ⅛ inches
Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of Graham and Susan Nash

ROBERT MOTHERWELL

The Displaced Table, 1943
Tempera, wood veneer, paper, ink, graphite, and colored pencil on canvas
43 ¼ x 32 ⅛ x 2 inches
Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of Robert H. Halff through the Modern and Contemporary Art Council

Untitled, 1943
Watercolor and ink on paperboard
15 ⅛ x 11 ⅛ inches
The Menil Collection, Houston

NANCY NEWHALL

Buckminster Fuller, 1948/1990
Gelatin silver print
7 ⅝ x 9 ½ inches
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Accessions Committee Fund purchase

Buckminster Fuller, Black Mountain College, 1948/1990
Gelatin silver print
7 ½ x 9 ½ inches
Scheinbaum and Russek Ltd., Santa Fe, NM

"Mae West," North Carolina, Black Mountain College, 1948/1990
Gelatin silver print
7 ¼ x 9 ½ inches
Sheinbaum and Russek Ltd., Santa Fe, NM

KENNETH NOLAND

Untitled, 1947
Oil on board
16 x 24 inches
The Kenneth Noland Foundation

CHARLES OLSON

"This," *Broadside*, no. 1, illustration by Nicholas Cernovich, 1952
24 x 18 inches
Charles Olson Research Collection. Archives and Special Collections, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center. University of Connecticut

Plan for the Operation of Black Mountain College after 1956, c. 1954
Ink on paper
8 ½ x 11 inches
Charles Olson Research Collection. Archives and Special Collections, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center. University of Connecticut

AMÉDÉE OZENFANT

Untitled, 1944
Graphite and pastel on watercolor board
22 x 30 inches
The Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of B. C. Holland

The Sleeping Canyon, 1945–46
Oil on canvas on Masonite
52 x 39 inches
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Gift of the T. B. Walker Foundation, Gilbert M. Walker Fund

DON PAGE

Orange Fabric with Changing Threads, c. 1936–42
Fabric
12 ¾ x 12 ¾ inches
Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina

Potted Plant Still Life, n.d.
Gouache on paper
18 x 30 inches
Don Page Collection, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina

PAT PASSLOF

Yardstick, 1948
Oil and enamel on canvas
33 ½ x 43 inches
The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, SC

JAMES PRESTINI

Bowl, c. 1943
Mexican mahogany
5 ¾ inches x 16 ⅛ inches diameter
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the designer, 1968

Bowl (no. 265), c. 1945
Honduran mahogany
1 inch x 5 ¾ inches diameter
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Dorothy Liebes

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Untitled (Zoo Relief Print), 1949
Etching on paper
17 ¾ x 12 ¾ inches
Collection of Susan Weil

Quiet House—Black Mountain, 1949/1990
Gelatin silver print
20 x 16 inches
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Purchase through a gift of Phyllis Wattis

Untitled, 1950
Enamel on fiberboard
26 ⅜ x 35 ⅞ inches
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1996

Untitled (Night Blooming Series), c. 1951
Oil, asphaltum, and gravel on canvas
62 ¼ x 31 ½ inches
The Menil Collection, Houston

White Painting (Four Panel), 1951/2015
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Untitled (a birthday picture for Hermine), 1952
Solar print
28 x 22 inches
Private collection. Courtesy the Estate of Jack Tworkov

Untitled (from Portfolio II), 1952
Gelatin silver print
5 ⅝ x 3 ¼ inches
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Untitled (from Portfolio I, 1952), 1952
Gelatin silver print mounted on board
5 ⅝ x 3 ¼ inches
Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

Untitled (from Portfolio I, 1952), 1952
Gelatin silver print mounted on board
3 ⅜ x 5 ⅝ inches
Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York

Minutiae, 1954/1976
Oil, paper, fabric, newsprint, wood, metal, plastic, mirror, and string on wood structure
84 ½ x 81 x 30 ½ inches
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Merce Cunningham Dance Company Collection, Gift of Jay F. Eckland, the Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation, Agnes Gund, Russell Cowles and Josine Peters, the Hayes Fund of HRK Foundation, Dorothy Lichtenstein, MAHADH Fund of HRK Foundation, Goodale Family Foundation, Marion Stroud Swingle, David Teiger, Kathleen Fluegel, Barbara G. Pine, and the T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2011

Small Rebus, 1956
Oil, graphite, paint swatches, paper, newspaper, magazine clippings, photograph, US map fragment, fabric, and three-cent stamps on canvas
35 x 46 x 1 ¾ inches
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. The Panza Collection

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG AND SUSAN WEIL

Female Figure, c. 1950
Exposed blueprint paper
105 x 36 inches
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Pat, c. 1951
Photograph of full-scale original blueprint on black-and-white film printed on blueprint paper
11 ⅞ x 4 ⅜ inches
The Menil Collection, Houston. Purchase with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust

Untitled (Susan with Cane), c. 1951
Photograph of full-scale original blueprint on black-and-white film printed on blueprint paper
12 x 7 ⅛ inches
The Menil Collection, Houston. Purchase with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust

Suspended · Shadow · Declared · Eternal · By · The · Death · Of · Time, c. 1951
Photograph of full-scale original blueprint on black-and-white film printed on blueprint paper
9 ⅞ x 5 ⅝ inches
The Menil Collection, Houston. Purchase with funds from the George R. Bunker Living Trust

JOHN REISS

Black and White Yarns, n.d.
Collage
14 x 22 inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum. Gift of Josef Albers

Color Control, n.d.
Collage and gouache on paper
14 x 22 inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum. Gift of Josef Albers

DAN RICE

Untitled, n.d.
Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper
16 ⅞ x 13 ⅞ inches
Collection of Hilary Dawn Rice

Untitled, n.d.
Ink and graphite on paper
16 ⅞ x 13 ⅞ inches
Collection of Hilary Dawn Rice

M. C. RICHARDS

Platter, c. 1953
Glazed stoneware
13 ½ x 12 ¾ x ½ inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

XANTI SCHAWINSKY

Spectodrama. Ecce Homo: Play, Life, Illusion (Stage Studies I and II, Demonstration of Form and Color, Part 1, Scene 2), 1936
Gelatin silver print
7 ¾ x 9 ⅞ inches
The Xanti Schawinsky Estate, Switzerland. Courtesy Broadway 1602, New York

Spectodrama (Black Mountain Stage Studies), 1936
Watercolor, pen, and graphite on paper
21 ½ x 25 ⅜ inches
The Xanti Schawinsky Estate, Switzerland. Courtesy Broadway 1602, New York

Spectodrama—9 (Folding and Enfolding), 1936–37
Photocollage
15 x 19 ¾ inches
The Xanti Schawinsky Estate, Switzerland. Courtesy Broadway 1602, New York

Untitled (Stage, 1057), c. 1938
Photocollage
11 x 14 inches
The Xanti Schawinsky Estate, Switzerland. Courtesy Broadway 1602, New York

BEN SHAHN

Song, 1950
Tempera on canvas mounted on wood
30 ⅞ x 52 inches
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of the Joseph H. Hirschhorn Foundation, 1966

ARTHUR SIEGEL

Untitled (Nude against Glass Block), 1944
Gelatin silver print
13 ⅜ x 5 ⅝ inches
Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College, Chicago

Untitled (Photogram), 1946
Gelatin silver print
13 ⅞ x 10 ⅞ inches
Courtesy Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago

Nude and Projection, 1947
Gelatin silver print
9 ⅝ x 7 ⅞ inches
Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Ralph M. Parsons Fund

EINI SIHVONEN

Color Transparency, n.d.
Color transparency and graphite
6 ⅞ x 8 ⅞ inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum. Gift of Josef Albers

Untitled (Flower Pots), 1947–49
Colored pencil and ink on wove paper
18 x 24 ⅛ inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum. Gift of Josef Albers

MIM SIHVONEN

Plates, 1947–48
Wood
½ x 5 ½ x 5 ½ inches; 1 x 9 x 9 inches; 1 x 11 x 11 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Stool, 1947
Maple
30 x 12 x 12 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

SEWELL SILLMAN

Values in Neutrals, n.d.
Collage on paper
15 x 20 ½ inches
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum. Gift of Josef Albers

AARON SISKIND

Untitled (Water-stained Wallpaper), c. 1949
Gelatin silver print mounted on Masonite
10 ⅛ x 13 ¼ inches
Courtesy Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York

North Carolina 9, 1951
Gelatin silver print
11 x 14 inches
Collection of James Bouley

North Carolina 11, 1951
Gelatin silver print
13 ⅜ x 9 ¼ inches
Courtesy Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York

North Carolina 32, 1951
Gelatin silver print
14 x 11 inches
Courtesy Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York

North Carolina 35, 1951
Gelatin silver print
9 ½ x 13 ⅞ inches
Courtesy Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York

RAY SPILLENGER

Sortie, 1952
Oil and mixed media on canvas
19 ⅞ x 15 ¾ inches
Collection of Paul and Clyde Spillenger

THEODOROS STAMOS

North Carolina Landscape, 1950
Oil on Masonite
36 x 48 inches
National Gallery of Art. Gift of Georgianna Stamatelos Savas honoring the artist's wishes

DAVID TUDOR

First Realization of John Cage's Concert for Piano and Orchestra: Solo for Piano (Dedicated to Elaine de Kooning), 1958
Ink on staff paper in binder
5 x 16 ¾ inches
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

ROBERT TURNER

Covered Casserole, 1952
Earthenware
5 ⅝ x 8 ½ inches
Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Helen Williams Drutt English in memory of Robert Turner and in honor of Elisabeth Agro

CY TWOMBLY

MIN-OE, 1951
Bitumen and oil-based house paint on canvas
34 x 39 ⅝ inches
Kravis Collection

The Song of the Border-Guard (with printed broadsheet of poem by Robert Duncan), 1952
Linocut on paper; accompanied by poem by Robert Duncan on separate sheet
20 x 13 ⅛ inches
The Menil Collection, Houston

JACK TWORKOV

House of the Sun, 1952–53
Oil on canvas
51 ⅜ x 48 ⅛ inches
Collection of Henry L. Hillman Jr.

ELAINE SCHMITT URBAIN

Black Mountain College (Ruth Asawa), 1946
Watercolor on paper
22 ¾ x 18 ⅜ inches
Lanier Family Collection, San Francisco

JOHN URBAIN

Color Theory Notebook
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

STAN VANDERBEEK

Untitled, 1949–50/2007
Gelatin silver print
10 x 8 inches
Estate of Stan VanDerBeek, New York

Untitled, 1949–50/2007
Gelatin silver print
10 x 8 inches
Estate of Stan VanDerBeek, New York

A Book of Ours, 1955–57
Paint on wood
12 panels, 11 x 7 ¼ inches each
Estate of Stan VanDerBeek, New York

GERALD VAN DE WIELE

Portrait of Robert Duncan, 1956
Graphite on paper
22 ½ x 17 ½ inches
The Jess Collins Trust

Portrait Sketches of Jorge Fick, n.d.
Ink on paper
10 ⅛ x 22 ⅞ inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

JEAN VARDA

Abstraction, n.d.
Watercolor, cardboard, newsprint, and paper on board
21 ⅜ x 25 ⅝ inches
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Gift of Herman Flax

ESTEBAN VICENTE

Untitled, 1953
Collage with gouache on paper
24 x 29 inches
McConnell Family Trust. Courtesy Jerald Melberg Gallery

PETER VOULKOS

Vase, c. 1952
Stoneware
14 ¾ x 7 inches
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Judith and Bruce Eissner

Rocking Pot, 1956
Stoneware with colemanite wash
13 ⅝ x 21 x 17 ½ inches
Smithsonian American Art Museum. Gift of the James Renwick Alliance and various donors and museum purchase

SUSAN WEIL

Untitled (Figure Albers Class), 1948
Graphite and ink on paper
22 x 17 inches
Collection of the artist

Secrets, 1949
Graphite and paper on board
10 x 10 inches
Collection of Kelly and Sundaram Tagore

Untitled, 1950
Ink and watercolor on paper
13 ¾ x 11 inches
Collection of the artist

DAVID WEINRIB

Vase, n.d.
Glazed stoneware
11 ¼ x 9 ½ x 5 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

MARGUERITE WILDENHAIN

Large Jar, c. 1950
Glazed earthenware
9 inches x 7 ½ inches base diameter
Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of Pauline Blank

Pitcher, c. 1950
Glazed earthenware
6 3/8 x 5 x 3 1/2 inches
Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of Pauline Blank

JONATHAN WILLIAMS

Charles Olson, 1951
Gelatin silver print
14 7/8 x 14 7/8 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Lou Harrison, Black Mountain College, 1951
Gelatin silver print
8 7/8 x 8 7/8 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Dan Rice with Robert Creeley, 1955
Gelatin silver print
14 1/2 x 14 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

EMERSON WOELFFER

Last Internment, 1948
Oil and enamel on canvas
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy Manny Silverman Gallery, Los Angeles

OSSIP ZADKINE

Femme Assise (*Seated Woman*), 1941
Terra-cotta
13 5/8 x 7 x 9 inches
The Menil Collection, Houston

EPHEMERA

Black Mountain College course catalogues, 1938–50
Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina

Black Mountain College 1944 Music, Art, and Work Institute brochures, 1944
8 x 5 inches each
Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina

Black Mountain College folding pamphlet, c. 1949
Ink on paper
6 1/4 x 125 3/4 inches
Lanier Family Collection, San Francisco

Black Mountain College Review, 1954–1957
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center

Building Project brochure
Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina

Converting the Impossible into the Actual (brochure)
Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina

Shuttle-Craft Practical Loom, from the Black Mountain College Weaving Workshop
66 3/4 x 60 x 50 inches
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center. Gift of Elma Johnson. Restored by Mikkel Hansen in 2013

SOUNDSCAPE CHECKLIST

Organized by John Andress

J. S. Bach, Chorale "Jesu, meine Fruede" BWV 227 (1723)

J. S. Bach, *Well-Tempered Clavier, Book II*, Prelude in E Flat Major BWV 876 (1742)

Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonata no. 32 in C minor, Op.111, I. Maestoso—Allegro con brio ed appassionato (1822)

Pierre Boulez, Piano Sonata No. 2, III. Modéré, Presque vif (1947–48)

John Cage, Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano, V. (1946–48)

John Cage, *Music of Changes, I.* (1951)

John Cage, *Williams Mix* (1951–53)

Henry Cowell, "The Banshee" (1925)

Miles Davis, "C.T.A" (1953)

Duke Ellington, "Caravan" (1936)

Lou Harrison, Seven Pastorales, VI. To My Mother (1949–51)

Roland Hayes, "As One People" (recorded 1955)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, "Voi che sapete" from *The Marriage of Figaro K. 492* (1786)

Erik Satie, Incidental Music from *The Ruse of Medusa* (1913)

Arnold Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11, 1. Moderately (1909)

Stefan Wolpe, Piece for Oboe, Cello, Percussion, and Piano, Oboe Quartet I. *Early Morning Music* (1955)

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LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation
Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, PA
Amistad Research Center, New Orleans
Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer
The Art Institute of Chicago
Estate of Ruth Asawa
Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, NC
Beverly A. Berman and Jeffrey K. Backerman
Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, Asheville, NC
Robin Blaser and David Farwell
James Bouley
The Josef and Yaye Breitenbach Foundation
The Jess Collins Trust
Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York
John E. Cram
Merce Cunningham Trust
Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago
Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles
Jacqueline Gourevitch
Mary Emma Harris
Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Cambridge, MA
Henry L. Hillman Jr.
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
The Johnson Collection
The Ray Johnson Estate
Clemens Kalischer
Kravis Collection
Hudson Lanier Family
Lanier Family Collection
Paul Lanier
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Gregg and Linda MacMillan
Susan and Larry Marx
McConnell Family Trust
The Menil Collection, Houston
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College, Chicago
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
The Kenneth Noland Foundation
Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York
C. F. Peters Corporation
Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC
Private collections
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation
Hilary Dawn Rice
Saint Louis Art Museum
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Sheinbaum and Russek Ltd., Santa Fe
Manny Silverman Gallery, Los Angeles
Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Paul and Clyde Spillenger
Jeffrey Sprecher
Stanford University Libraries, Department of Special Collections, Stanford, CT
Kelly and Sundaram Tagore
Yvette Torres Fine Art
The Xanti Schawinsky Estate
Estate of Stan VanDerBeek
Annemarie Verna Gallery
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT
Susan Weil
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
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Weverka Family Collection
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
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LEAP *BEFORE YOU* LOOK

BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

1933–1957

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Curator: Helen Molesworth with Ruth Erickson
Curatorial assistant: Bryan Barcena

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October 10, 2015–January 24, 2016

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front Josef Albers, *Leaf Study IX* (detail), c. 1940. Leaves on paper, 28 x 24 3/4 inches. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.
back Hazel Larsen Archer, *Ray Johnson*, n.d. Gelatin silver print, 9 3/4 x 6 7/8 inches. Estate of Hazel Larsen Archer and Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center.

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Students walking toward Black Mountain College barn and silo, n.d.

BACK ENDPAPER

Students Suska Dickson, Jerrold Levy, Felix Krowinski, and unidentified man outside of a bar, n.d.
Students moving pianos to Lake Eden Campus, n.d.

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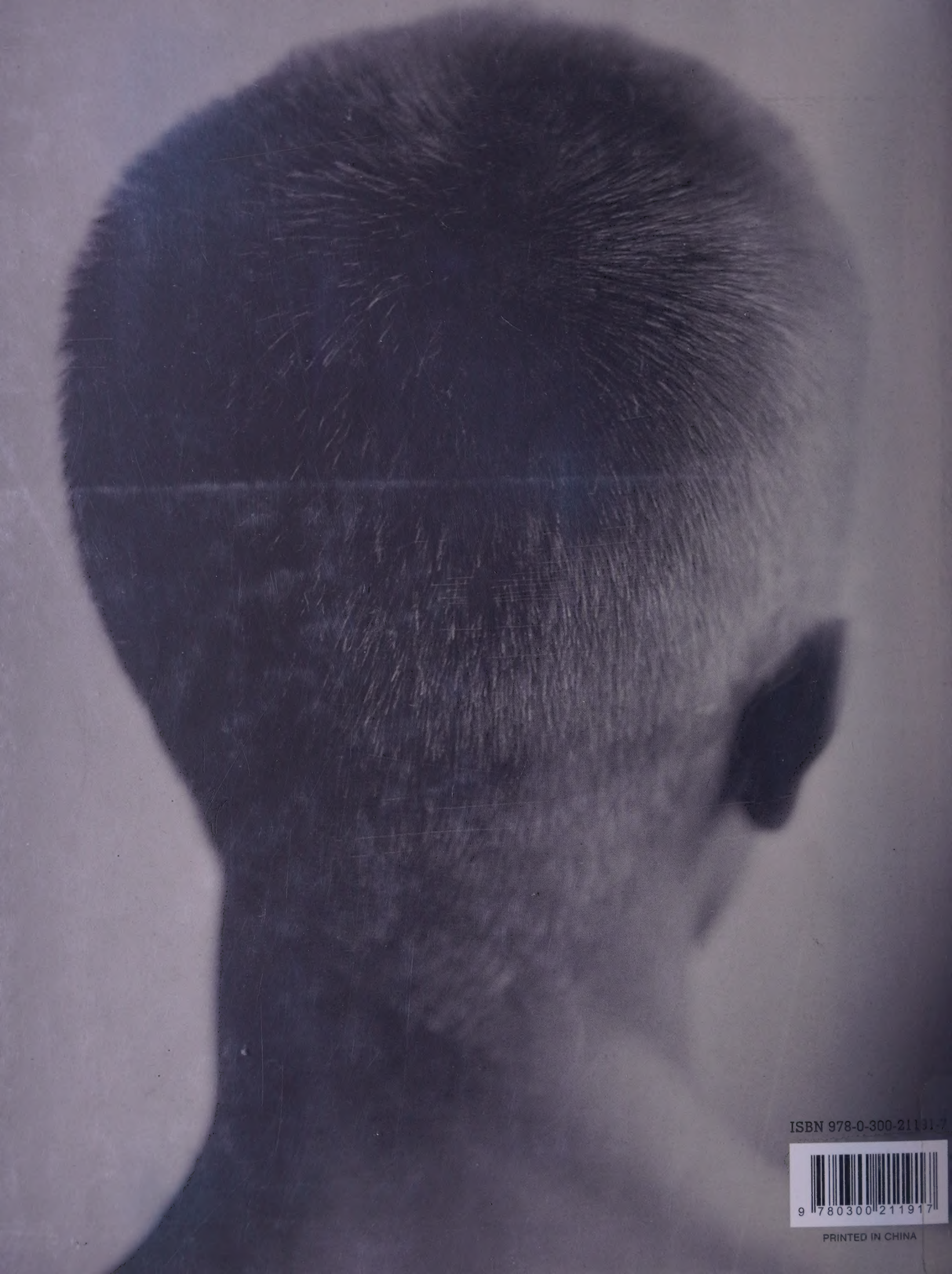

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